

103. Simplifying Your Life with Emily Ley – Episode Transcript

Leah Glover Hayes: Welcome to Her Story of Success, a podcast featuring stories of influential women trailblazers and business leaders who have defined and pursued their own versions of success and fulfillment. We hope these stories, lessons learned and celebrations inspire you to believe in yourself and your own journey a little bit more. I'm Leah Glover Hayes, CEO and podcast host of Her Story of Success women's business and media collective.

In today's episode, I have the honor of interviewing Emily Ley, the founder of Simplified.

Emily Ley: I can imagine there's somebody listening to this that's like, "I'm just trying to like survive right now. And I can't even fathom what I want." And to you, I say, "Amen sister."

Leah Glover Hayes: Emily started Simplified as a side hustle on Etsy 12 years ago, and since then she's grown it into a well-known brand of planners and home organizational tools that are carried by retailers like Target and Office Depot.

Emily is also the author of four books, and we are excited to talk to her about her newest book, *Growing Boldly* today.

Emily Ley: Not only do you have more than you realize, you have more agency than you realize, so you can make choices that will help set you up to create that life, to build that life.

Leah Glover Hayes: She's going to share about building her company, and she's also going to break down the 5 key practices women can use to build a life they love.

So welcome Emily to Her Story of Success.

Emily Ley: Hi, thank you so much for having me. I can't wait to chat.

Leah Glover Hayes: Absolutely. And so I have so many questions that I want to ask, and I kind of want you to view this maybe as like a mentor session. So I'm newer in my business, you've been doing this thing for 12 years. So I want you to start out with like your big why. Tell us a little bit about who you are as a person. Why did you even

start your companies? And then I want to go back to, like, what did it look like when you started and how did you grow it?

Emily Ley: Yeah, the main reason I started my company is because I grew up with a mom who was a teacher. She was a school teacher for 40 years, and I thought for sure that I would be gifted with that same DNA, and going to go to college to be a teacher and was going to have the same schedule she had. So I could have summers off with my kids and afternoons off. And I enrolled in an education track and I lasted just a couple of months before I realized, you have to be born with something to be able to do the magic that teachers do. And I just, I didn't have it. And so I kind of made a gutsy move and majored in English writing, because it was just something I loved and then ended up getting a master's degree in nonprofit management. And long story short, was in a very corporate role and was working 60 hours a week, driving an hour each way to work, and was a newlywed and was ready to start a family and realized, "I'm not going to have the flexibility my mom had." And I wanted that. I wanted a career that I was passionate about like she was, you know, and I wanted the flexibility to be room mom if I wanted to or show up at the Halloween party, and I didn't have it where I was. So I had to make my own dream job basically.

Leah Glover Hayes: I love that. So you're working the corporate job while you're starting a shop on Etsy. And what were you selling? What were you doing on Etsy?

Emily Ley: Well, my husband and I got married in 2008 and I wanted to have Crane stationary for our wedding. I wanted Crane wedding invitations, and I could not afford Crane wedding invitations. And so I used some card stock and a little kit from target, and I made our invitations on my home printer. And I was like, well, this is fun. I mean, it wasn't Crane, but it was beautiful and I put my heart into it. And so I was helping run a women in leadership and philanthropy program at a large state university at the time. My master's degree is in nonprofit management, and I was just kind of like on this track to do this university advancement thing. And I told my husband one day, it was on a long road trip. I said, "I am just like, I'm just miserable. I feel like I've been sucked dry by this job. And I'm not happy. I don't feel like I'm using my, all my abilities. And I want to like, make something. And I'm working with all these women who are doing these incredible things in the community, and I want to do

that." And he was like, "Well, why don't you just try? Try something different, and you have time and we don't have kids yet." And I said, "Well, okay, well, I'll just, I'll see what I can do." So I opened a shop on this brand new platform called Etsy that no one had ever heard of it before. This was when Twitter was the thing and Facebook was kind of cool and new, there was no Instagram. And I just spent a lot of late nights Googling and watching YouTube videos and asking dumb questions, and what felt like dumb questions, and teaching myself how to use Microsoft publisher to make invitations, which if you're a graphic designer, you're cringing because it's the worst program to use to make anything. But I couldn't afford Illustrator. I just had to like be scrappy and work with what I had. And the company started very, very small. I made digitally designed monograms on Etsy, which required no investment. We put exactly \$0 into the company. So I just took my \$5 here and my \$5 there from sales and put them together until I had a hundred dollars and put that together until I can afford a website. And I worked full-time at the university and full-time, maybe more than full-time at the business, taking, not a dollar, putting every dollar back into the company for two years until I was able to leave my full-time job and invest myself into the company. And it was still a struggle to just get the thing off the ground. But once my oldest, Brady, was born, I found myself in a position of being really grateful for the flexibility I had, but also really overwhelmed by the fact that being a mother and working from home was not as glamorous as I thought it might be. And having flexibility was wonderful, but like I was pacing my house with a laptop on one hip and a baby. I was trying to nurse on a conference call so he wouldn't cry, and laundry falling out of the chair that I hadn't folded. And social media was telling me that every woman on planet earth was doing life really well and easily and had their hair done and heels on and dinner on the table at six. And I was like, dying. So I ended up going to Target and looking for a planner or a tool that would help me get my life in order. And I was really overwhelmed by all of them. And I had always had this knack for like looking at a mess and figuring out ways to make it simpler and easier. So I went home and made my own with a Sharpie and a binder. And that is a very short way of explaining how the Simplified planner was born.

Leah Glover Hayes: I love it. So really what I'm hearing is you created something out of a need that you had for yourself.

Emily Ley: Yeah, it was absolutely like that.

Leah Glover Hayes: And I just think about how many businesses started like that. I mean, Spanx started in the same way, you started like that. Like, I was just looking at one of the really nice sports bras. And I was listening to the founder story. She's like, I was in sports, I needed something for myself. And I think that that's such a powerful way to start a company. That's why I started Her Story of Success. I was on a mission to like find mentors in my life. And I was like, well, let me just interview people and get mentorship. And so I love that that's how you started. So let's talk about, what did it look like to start to actually grow your business? I'd love for you to share, like, how big is your company now? Like, do you have employees, you know, if you don't mind sharing, like either your revenue range or something like that, just so we can see like small shop on Etsy to where you are today.

Emily Ley: So we started, I say we, because my husband has always been kind of the finance mind behind the scenes that helps me make those big decisions, especially in the beginning. So I started the company in 2008. In 2011 was when the Simplified planner was born. And once I had the idea for the planner, right around that time is when we started outsourcing to a larger printer and having more print capabilities to create notepads and binders and just all sorts of things. And so 2011 was a big turning point. We are big Dave Ramsey fans, and we have run Simplified completely debt free from the beginning. And it was really important to us early on, because we didn't have anything to put into the business to be quite honest. And we didn't want to take on the risk for our family of taking on a business loan or any of that stuff. And my husband's more entrepreneurial than I am. So he was like, let's just see what we can do, putting, you know, putting the pennies together and just putting it back in. That's how I worked at my full-time job for two years. Now the company is a multi-million dollar company with over 150 products in our online store and licensed collections in Walmart, Target, Office Depot and Staples. And I have eight employees, I call them teammates cause we all work together, but there are nine of us on team Simplified, and it is just, part of me is like, this is insane. It's wild that it turned into this. And the other part of me is like, of course it did, because we worked our tails off and we believe in what we're doing. And you mentioned kind of, that felt need of me having a problem that I wanted to fix, like a solution-based product. For me, it always has to come back to that why. Like that thing that you're connected with. I always say the day I own just a planner company or a company that makes paper goods is the

day I don't wanna do this anymore. It's a lot of work. It's always back to that, like, what's it all about. It's about empowering women who are trying to do more than it ever in history before, like we are being asked, especially right now to do so much. And that little quirk in me, that was the little girl that loved to clean out under her bed on Saturdays, like, that was my idea of fun, nurturing that and kind of leaning into that weird part of me became a career. And so that's why I was so inspired to write *Growing Boldly*, both because I think there's a lot of books out there that will tell you to hustle till it hurts, to work until you're dead to just run yourself ragged into the ground. And I think there is so much value in that, but it is detrimental to tell women that you have to run yourself ragged, because if you are not balancing that with rest and filling yourself back up and educating yourself and leaning into what makes you you, and sleeping, then you're just going to burn out.

Leah Glover Hayes: Yeah. And I want to dig into that because one of the things that I really appreciate about you is that you don't hide the fact that you did burn yourself out, right? Like you learned the lessons that you did by making some of the mistakes. So I want to talk the reality of what it looked like to burn yourself out emotionally, with your family. Cause I know some of us, and I say us because I've been there too, what did burnout look like for you? And how did you know that you were at that point?

Emily Ley: I have hit the wall multiple times and I, it's kind of a joke between Brian and I, that it happens just about every three years. It's cyclical. I know better. But I still am a workhorse. I might not be the smartest person in the room, but I will outwork you. Like, I know how to stay up late and get sweaty, but I hit a really big wall in 2017. I had two books out, had two, two year olds at home, I had a six year old, I had a growing team. My company was, our products were carried in 800 stores around the world, which sounds just amazing to say, but it was painful to live. I felt really like bad and selfish to say that I was miserable, because I had everything I ever wanted. I mean, the company, I had a book deal, had another one on the horizon. I had twins and the baby, like we had prayed for these kids forever. Why would I complain? But I, one day I remember just going into my bedroom and laying, like you do, like face down on the bed and just crying. And Brian came in and he was like, "What's the matter?" And I said, "I just like, I'm so tired. I'm just so tired. And I don't, I'm not excited about this anymore. I don't know what I'm doing wrong. Everything is growing, the numbers look great, but something's not right." And he said to me, "Well, we need to look at how

spread thin you are. I mean, you have said yes to everything in the name of growing a company and achieving your goals, but remember why you started this in the first place." And why I started in the first place was to have flexibility as a mom. You know, I could say it was to achieve all the big things. I mean, get in Forbes magazine. I was in Forbes that year. It was mind-blowing, things were happening, but that's not why I started it. I started it to have flexibility as a mom and I did not have that anymore. And so we made a very calculated decision. Lots of numbers were crunched and discussions were had. We made a calculated decision to focus on that 80-20 rule, where 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your effort. And we cut our wholesale program. I wanted to focus on the women we were serving, and I was spending all my time flying. I was on 48 airplanes that year. I was flying all over the place to meet with store owners and trade shows. And I wanted to focus on the women who were buying the planner and helping them achieve change in their life, helping them take a mess and make it simpler. And so we decided to focus on the online store and we cut 40% of our revenue. We kept our whole staff. Luckily we were able to do that. And the next year, by focusing all of our efforts online, we doubled our revenue.

Leah Glover Hayes: Wow. I just want to pause on that. I think that someone is listening that needed to hear that. That the 80-20 rule is, is real. And it's scary because what you said was we cut 40% of our revenue, and the next year you doubled in size. Doubled in size. That's incredible. But let's talk about about when you doubled in size? Give me the comparison of the feeling, the peace, like what did you feel and where were you mentally, emotionally when you saw, "Oh, my goodness. Making these decisions, getting back to me, getting back to my why, I was able to grow, and this is what it feels like."

Emily Ley: I was fearful of replicating the same path that took me to the burnout. So I was very cognizant of, if we're going to grow, let's grow in a way that helps us reach more people and increase the bottom line, but in a way that doesn't put more work on everyone's plate. So let's find ways to automate, let's find ways to cut expenses so that we can invest those dollars into things that are revenue generating. And so we did things like hiring an incredible artist who came on our team and paints just incredible original artwork for us. We created monthly coaching for every customer that purchases a Simplified planner so that we can show up in her inbox once a month for the life of her planner to help her get the most out of it. We just made the

experience for our customer more special, more fulfilling. And actually closing the door on wholesale is terrifying. I thought everybody would freak out. Not one retailer was upset and if they were, they didn't tell me, but I had so many say, "I'm an entrepreneur as well. And I admire the decision you're making. Cause it's gutsy, it's bold." And I was really touched by that. And also, a couple of months later I was sitting in a library working on a book, and I got an email from a company that said, we'd like to partner with you and help you get your products into Target, Walmart, Office Depot, Staples. And I told them no. I said, "I've been down this road, burned out. We're focusing on our online store. We're doing this. I don't want to go back to that." And they said, first of all they said, let's get on the phone. And second, they said, "No, like we get why you made that decision and who you are. And we know what Simplified is all about. And we want to help you take the sense and sensibilities of your brand and reach women at a different price point so that they can experience the joys of a simplified life as well." And that's how the at-a-glance partnership we have came to be. And they manage all of the work of it. We are able to manage the creation of the products, but they handle distribution and all the nuts and bolts so helped us achieve that without all the work on our plate. So it's just, it's a constant check-in of like, is it working.

Leah Glover Hayes: Is it working, but also, I really want to highlight that when you are looking at who is your ideal client, when someone reaches out to you and they say, "I see who you are and what you're trying to accomplish, and I want to be a part of it. And here's what it could look like," and when you see the here's what it could look like, and it brings you peace because it achieves what you want to achieve without sacrificing the heart and the why behind what you're doing. And actually like multiplies it. Like I want women to hear, like, you can have a win-win-win, good clients should be win, win, win. It's a win for you. It's a win for them. And it's a win for the people that you're serving. That is like a massive mission that I have is to help all business owners, but just really realize like your client should be, win-win win, like to your point, like, oh my goodness, now that you're able to do this, and it actually it's not work on you and their team, that's what they're good at. They're doing what they're really good at and you get to continue to do what you're passionate about and what you're really good at. I love that.

So let's jump into *Growing Boldly*. Like I'm excited to read this book. We just talked about offline that, you know, there's a little snafu and it's going to come out a little bit later than it was supposed to. And you know what? We, as women have to deal with these types of things, this is real life. Like it happens. You think that you're going to launch in a month and something completely out of your control, nothing that you did wrong, it happens. And it moved your plans. So *Growing Boldly*. Number one, lesson is dealing with things, life's not perfect. So launches aren't perfect. Product launches aren't perfect. So let's talk about this. So I know that you said you have five key practices, so I'm just going to allow you to just tell me what you want us to know about this book and all the things.

Emily Ley: Well let me first back up and tell you, I wrote the book and turned in the manuscript mid-February, 2020, which we all know is like four weeks before the world unraveled. So when I turned it in, I was so on fire about it. And like, man, this is just, I am so proud of it. Once we started editing, I got really scared. Like, life has been turned on its head. Is this going to still hold true? You know, are there these principles going to still be accurate in a post-COVID or during-COVID world? And they do. That is why I'm so proud of it, because the book is written on truths that do not change even when life is hard. And you know, the whole delay of the book release is COVID-related, but it's just another example of like, life will throw you curve balls and you just have to go with it and be agile and learn how to pivot. So *Growing Boldly* is written on five key principles that I think are paramount to building a life you love. And it's an, it's a BUILD acronym. So the letter B stands for **"Believe in who you are."** U is **"Utilize what you have,"** leave no stone unturned, utilize everything you have. I is, **"Imagine the life you want."** So visualizing everything. L is **"Love people well,"** be a good human, be kind. And then D is **"Do what matters, forget the rest."** And so the chapters are organized under these five principles, and share not only my story of building Simplified and all of the hurdles that came along with that, but stories from other women who have very diverse backgrounds, and have gone up against hard, sometimes tragic things and still managed to flourish in super dry seasons.

Leah Glover Hayes: To me, this, this isn't just for women entrepreneurs. This is for everyone. It doesn't matter if you are in corporate America. There's a lot of women that listen to this podcast that still are looking at, you know, moving up the career path. So I think I do want everyone to hear, like it's not just for women entrepreneurs

and, “believe in who you are,” I love that you started that. I was literally just doing a mentor program for a group that works with high school students. And that was the number one thing that I said. It's learned. This is not, because it's not like, believe in yourself once, it's not have confidence. It's the process of having to choose to believe in who you are and have confidence in that, but also like, how do you understand who you already are? So can we go into that? Like for just a minute, I love the believe in who you are. Cause it's, it's kind of big.

Emily Ley: I'm here for this conversation, because over the past year, I mean years, but also definitely the past year, it's so easy for us to get lost in all the hats we wear. I mean, I was about to turn 37 when I was writing *Growing Boldly*. And I started to feel like, I think I'm just now becoming who I was meant to be. I think I'm just now realizing who Emily is like outside of Emily Ley, outside of Simplified, outside of Brian's wife and all the kids' mom. And like who am I under all of that. And there's this whole process of self discovery that's like a big chunk of worksheets in the book where we talk about answering questions, like your biggest fear, the most proud you've ever been, your personal style, like just getting to know those quirky, different parts of you and then realizing, believing in who you are, doesn't just mean believing in your confidences, in your strengths, but also knowing that you are not defined by your past, you are not defined by your childhood or that thing that happened to you or that bad choice you made, or those years you spent feeling stuck or your addiction or whatever that is, you are not defined by that. You are defined by these things. And this is who God says you are, and understanding these truths and standing on that to believe in who you are, not the lies that we've fed ourselves or that social media feeds ourselves.

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Leah Glover Hayes: So you are a business center, a big business owner, you are a wife, you're a mom of three. Everybody's different, but what does that look like for you? How do you find the time to get quiet and to really as a practice, not like you figure out who you are once, but how do you do that? How do you implement that into your crazy busy life?

Emily Ley: I think it involves understanding yourself and understanding what you need to be able to still your mind. There's so much noise in the world. I mean, I wrote a whole book about it. There's just so much noise, literally. It's so valuable for us to learn how to just turn down the noise. For me, that looks like putting in my headphones and listening to a book or going on a walk, just giving myself something to do that isn't the usual, that isn't the kids or the work or the house stuff, or whatever, giving myself time to just take a break and let the gears slow down a little bit and let my brain kind of sort out all the thoughts of the day into the buckets they need to go in so that I can just recenter. I think it looks different for everyone. I think it's a matter, I think it's a matter of soul care, but tactically I love a good, inspirational story, but like, please Lord. Tell me how to do it right while we're here. Luckily for me, I'm big on time-blocking, and let me also say my kids are in school, like full-time all three of my kids are in, like in the school. They're not at home in school for now, for now not homeschooling anymore. They're in the school. So I have a good chunk of the day to work and I try to work just during school hours. And then on the off hours, I try to be mom. So it's compartmentalizing. And also, I always say it's a little bit like riding a bike, you balance on the bike because you're shifting this way and then you're shifting that way and you're going to try and keep from face planting. So if I lean hard into work one day or one week or one season, like a book release, I might lean hard into family or mom, you know, mom, wife roles the next day or the next season. So it's kind of that hustle, rest, work, family. It's that, it's just that balance of like, don't go too

hard this way for too long, because you're going to eventually need to go back. Otherwise you're going to fall down.

Leah Glover Hayes: Well, and I love what I'm hearing is you, you do allow yourself permission to lean in to something when it's needed, because you do know that you can lean back. I interviewed a lady and she was kind of talking about the buckets. Like sometimes you're going to fill up this bucket, and while there may not be, because some people get triggered by the word balance, some people like to use the word blend, like however you define it. It's a journey, it's daily, and it's a being able to assess, "Okay. Yesterday I went really hard on that. So today, maybe I need to lean a little bit on this." And I do want to see, what does use what you have mean. So, for example, like what did it look like for you to use what you had? We hear that you have a great marriage. It's something that I share, but do you give examples of women that maybe are not married? Maybe they don't have the traditional family life. What does that look like to use what you have?

Emily Ley: Yeah. One of the stories that I shared in the book was this beautiful woman named Candace, and her husband actually passed away in a work accident when her kids were little. And she told me this story, she's gone on to build a beautiful career, and more than even that like a beautiful family and the relationships she has, her voice is incredible. And I asked her like, "How on earth did you keep going? Like how, how did you pick up the pieces and keep pushing forward?" And she said, "I just did. I had no other option. I just kept putting my feet on the floor, and eventually it didn't feel like I was dying every morning. Eventually it didn't feel like it was absolute work. Eventually I felt like God was helping me get my life together and keep going." And she did that. The kind of theme of her story is legacy. She wanted his legacy to live on and she wanted to build a legacy of family.

And so I think that what we have to remember, is a lot of times we can look at things like in the media or in social media and think, "Man, that girl did it. She's got her business. She got her life together. Her house is clean. Everything's great." But what you're seeing is the flower. You're not seeing the roots underneath, the problems. I mean, even on my social media feeds, you're seeing an absolute highlight reel. I didn't show you the kids who woke me up at four o'clock last night, cause it was storming outside and all that went down there. What you see is the beautiful parts.

And so when you utilize what you have, you take a look around at your life, and do you think, "Okay. I have a friend who started a business. I can ask her questions. I have a computer. It might be an old PC or something. I have Google. I can Google things. I have a hundred dollars, or whatever that I've saved that I can invest in buying a domain or whatever your, your goal is." Not only do you have more than you realize, you have more agency than you realize, so you can make choices that will help set you up to create that life, to build that life. If you're spending four hours a day on social media, you have more time than you thought you had, you know, and so a lot of times it's just taking inventory and thinking like, "I feel like I have nothing and I'm starting with absolutely nothing, but if I take a look around, I actually may have more than I even thought I had. And I may have more people in my life that I can depend on or ask for help or ask for advice as well."

Leah Glover Hayes: I love that. I just got so many visuals of like, you know, sometimes when you say, when you feel like you're starting from nothing and just taking inventory, I think that exercise in itself, I was just thinking about like, I'm part of a mastermind group and it's so funny how, like, one of the things I think I'm really good at is like being vulnerable and honest and telling people what I need. And Emily, like you were talking, I'm like, huh, there are so many people that I have not shared, like, what I desire, what I need, what I need to get into the next level. Like, even as you were saying that I'm like, I just thought of like four things.

The other thing is like, "imagine the life that you dream of." One of the quotes that I've heard, and everybody has their own thing. You've got to listen to yourself and what's inside you. But one of the quotes that I heard that I actually don't love is, "I never dreamed of it. I just worked for it." And that ties back to your point of like, that does not inspire me at all, because sometimes I visualize those people that have all the awards and they've reached all the levels of success. And I'm like, "Cool for you. What I want is all of that while I still go on vacation with my husband, while I, you know, we're going through the adoption process and I'm able to have kids and have good relationships with my friends." And so I, when I think of "imagine the life that you dream of," I really want to hear how you went through that because I'm actually going through that process right now, because I have like on paper, like I've got the company, you know, um, we moved into a new house, I'm sitting in a podcast, I'm calling it a podcast studio, but Emily it's a closet in a studio above my garage. The

goal is to create a beautiful video, actually just like Christy Wright at Business Boutique. I saw that you interviewed with her. I'm like, I have Christie's picture of her studio, like that is on my vision board. I'm like, I want to create that, but right now, until I can afford to invest into that, I'm in a closet with a pretty little background, but I'm starting to build out the dream life. So what, what's kind of the process for the busy mom that maybe doesn't have a weekend to go by herself and sit down and just dream and scrapbook.

Emily Ley: Oh man. You know, well, you nailed it. First of all, you answered your question for me, because when you said you, you have that picture of Christy Wright's studio, like you visualized it and you're, you might not be exactly there yet, but you're taking steps to eventually get there. So you know where you're going. If you don't have a roadmap. You're just going to kind of go like this. So for me, a couple of years ago, we were living in Tampa, which is about eight hours away from where I am now in Pensacola, where my family is, and Brian and I just sat down and said, "Okay, where are we going?" I wanted to have a job that gave me flexibility, he wanted to live on the water, we wanted to have a big house or we could have lots of family come over in times that aren't COVID, I wanted to be able to work from home. He wanted to be able to be an entrepreneur as well and pursue his own things. I wanted to have a photo studio in our house so that we didn't have to pay thousands of dollars to rent one. And so we envisioned this life, and then decided "Let's, what are the steps we can take now to just inch our way toward it?" And in 2018, we finished building our forever house on the water in Pensacola, around family. And it was such a long time coming. It was like 10 years after we intended to do it, but we got there eventually. And now, it's weird because our kitchen, we have a navy blue island, and I'm not kidding you, when I used to sit down and close my eyes and try to envision like what my life would look like in 2021, it didn't involve a pandemic, but it did involve a navy blue island and my, in my head, like my parents and my brother and my sister-in-law and my niece, like we're all around the island having Thanksgiving dinner or like, you know, just hanging out and we're doing that now, but we're doing that now because I was able to imagine what it is I want.

Now let me back up and also say, I can imagine there's somebody listening to this. That's like, "Oh, that's great. I'm just trying to like survive right now. And I can't even fathom what I want. I don't know what I want. I want my kids to go to school, and I

want my family to be healthy and maybe be able to give them hugs.” And to you, I say, “Amen sister.” And also part of the way we discover, or we eventually visualize what it is that we want, is we take time to still our brains, to take off all of our hats, even if it's 10 minutes a day in a closet with little fingers coming under the door, cause I've done that sitting down and, and working through some of the worksheets in the book or giving yourself time to journal. That's where that comes to fruition and you start to be able to paint the picture in your head. And once you've painted the picture, then you can connect the dots on how you're gonna get there.

Leah Glover Hayes: Oh, that is beautiful. Thank you. I love that you shared that for anyone that's like not even able to visualize right now, just taking those, those little steps. I am so excited about this book and getting it in. And I'm sorry that there was a delay, but you know what, maybe we just needed to have this conversation first before I got the book. So now I'm like better equipped to go through it and more inspired.

And one of the things that I love about you is you never shy away from the hard part and then the tactical things. One of the things that you shared in an interview that I listened to was what you do at the end of the day. So what I want to get into, I know we only have a few more minutes is, I do want to get into a couple more tactical things that you do that you suggest, especially like the mom, that's got the three kids and you're working full time, your husband's working full-time, I'm saying that because I'm thinking of my sister, she has three children, it's loud in that house. So for that mom of three, that it's really loud. What are the things that you suggest women do that revolve around decluttering?

Emily Ley: Yeah. So for me, physical clutter is mental clutter. Like if there's stuff everywhere in my house, which is every day, because people live there, it just makes my brain, I don't, I think it's just part of who I am, but it just overwhelms me so much. And so what I try to do is not pick up throughout the day, like nonstop, which is what I want to do. But at the end of the day, I will go get a laundry basket. Okay? Big white laundry basket thing that we have in our laundry room. And I would walk the house with the kids and anything that's out of place, trash shoes, clothes, toys, whatever. We throw out the laundry basket. Okay.

Leah Glover Hayes: With the kids. The kids are coming with you. This is not you doing it by herself.

Emily Ley: No, they need to be taught how to do it. So they deal with it. So we pick up everything that's out of place, and we just throw it in. Even if it's a pen that needs to go in the drawer that's right here, we just, we put everything in the basket and then we take it to our rug and we dump it out, and then we sort it into what room it goes in. And then everybody takes a room and you go put it away in the room. And it takes what would be like an hour long job, and it makes it like 20 minutes. And if I can give my kids and my husband who is not on the same wavelength as me in terms of like a neat, like obsessive person. If I can give them an end time, like, "Hey guys, we're going to play three songs or whatever. And when these songs are over, we're done." They'll get on board and we'll go and do it. And my mom always taught me, kids and husbands have to be taught how to, not everybody was raised by a mother, that was like my mom who taught me how to organize, how to clean out a drawer, how to clean out a closet. And kids, especially, they have to be taught. And I involve them as much as I can until I hit a point where I need a minute and then I will just put my headphones in and be like, "Y'all go play and I'll do it myself." But I think it's important to have them help you as much as possible. So that's one tactic. I also think it's important to, really the night before, like in the evening, take 10 minutes and just get yourself ready, prep the coffee for the morning, wipe off the countertops, put the things away. Just so when you wake up in the morning, you really kind of feel like you can hit the ground running.

Leah Glover Hayes: I love that. My godmother always said, if you will spend five minutes a day cleaning a room, then you're not spending a half to a full day on Saturday cleaning. She's like, just pick up one in check. Don't get yourself overwhelmed. And I love the game-ify thing. I love like, okay, I'm going to spend, and I know my fitness and health friends are gonna shoot me for doing this, but I do reward myself with treats, but I don't have an issue with it. I work out four times, like three to four times a week. And like, I eat very, very healthy. So this is a disclaimer, please. This is only for me, but it's like, okay, if I put everything away and I wake up everything down, then I get to have, like, some vanilla wafers are like my jam right now. I love that because involving, and my husband and I we'll pick up together. We'll either cook together. We'll clean together. We do that together because one, you

can't resent someone when they're doing it with you. Like, I can't resent it, but also like, if he does more than I do, then I start to feel guilty. So we're like, "Okay, let's do this together really quickly. Knock it out in 10 minutes and then we're done and we can enjoy each other." Yeah. So I love that you're involving your kids. Okay. Well, tell us where we can find you.

Emily Ley: I'm @EmilyLey on Instagram, Emilyley.com. And you can find the book at all the places, all the places books are sold.

Leah Glover Hayes: And then Miss Emily Ley, how do you define success today? And has that changed recently?

Emily Ley: Oh yeah. It changes often. Today I'm defining success by focusing on the things that matter, and taking care of them, and knowing when to swing back the other way. Having that intuition and listening to it.

Leah Glover Hayes: Ah, I love it. Thank you so much. I just appreciate who you are as a woman, as a wife, as a leader, as an entrepreneur and as a mentor for me and this amazing Her Story of Success crew. So I'd love to keep up with you and I cannot wait to get your book. Maybe we can do like a giveaway when it comes out. That would be so fun. Well, thank you, Emily. I appreciate your time. And I look forward to going through *Growing Boldly*.

Emily Ley: Thank you so much.

Leah Glover Hayes: Thanks for tuning in! At Her Story of Success, we are on a mission to help women-business owners, leaders and professionals build your tribe and reach your next level of success by connecting you to one another, equipping you with resources and empowering you along your journey. We would love for you to be a part of our tribe and further this mission by sharing this podcast with a friend or co-worker you want to help succeed.. And you can stay up to date with all of our episodes, blogs and events by signing up for our newsletter at Herstoryofsuccess.com.

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