

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 109:

How to Get Unstuck and Start Really Living with Michelle Petitpas

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Jen Riday: You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 109.

Intro: Welcome to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, stories of vibrant women living happy lives. And now, your host, Jen Riday.

Jen Riday: Well, hello and welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women. I'm Dr. Jen Riday, host of this podcast, mom of 6, and I am here to help you shift from burnout, all the way up that ladder to living your purpose. And there are several steps in between, including learning how to manage your life and time, loving yourself, healing your relationships, and then figuring out what your purpose is; listening to intuition, finding out how you can best serve and make a difference on this planet, which makes you so much happier. Welcome to the show. I want to start out the show today with our review of the week, and that is from Kimber S. She wrote, "I have been listening to this podcast for about a month now and have been struggling with writing a review because I think I have to find just the right words to explain how amazing it is. This podcast has literally transformed my thinking and inspired me so much. I can't say enough great things about what you're doing here so I'll just let the constant smile on my face when I finish an episode, and the energy and vibration I'm bringing to those around me as a result, say it all. I can't imagine life without Vibrant Happy Women. Thank you!" Thank you so much for leaving that review, Kimber, I appreciate it. Thank you for being our review of the week. And if you would like to leave a review of the show, just go to jenriday.com/applepodcasts; all one word. We read a review of the week every week, and I would love to read yours. And every review helps. We have over 300 reviews now and love all the reviews that keep coming. Thank you again, Kimber.

I'm going to give a shout out to all of you who filled out the survey that I created for the podcast. I love all your feedback about the show, about what you want more of, what you would like me to change; so many good ideas. And if you haven't had the chance to fill out the survey yet, I would love your opinion about Vibrant Happy Women, your suggestions, your ideas for topics. Just go to jenriday. com/survey to fill out that questionnaire. It doesn't take long and you can enter to win a \$200 gift card from Amazon just by entering. Again, that's jenriday.com/survey.

Today we'll be talking with the lovely Michelle Petitpas, all about how to get unstuck and start living. In this episode, you'll learn how to shift your mindset from hopelessness and despair to positive and





silver lining thinking, why it's critical to have a positive tribe of like-minded friends, and Michelle's secret mindset trick that helped her lose 95 pounds, and so much more. You're going to love this interview, and I should let you know, Michelle is one of the original Vibrant Happy Women who attended the first Vibrant Happy Women retreat in February. And she is amazing; I totally love her. And she's from Nova Scotia! How cool is that? And so, without further ado, let's go ahead and jump into this episode and learn some great things from Michelle Petipas.

My guest today is Michelle Petitpas and she is always passionate and driven. She's a high achiever who feels deeply. She trained as a nurse with a background in psychiatry, geriatrics, and developmental disabilities, and currently, she is blessing others with skills as a foot care nurse who educates and speaks to groups to motivate change. She has experience in writing and editing and has a passion to help connect healing for transformation. She's been resilient in so many ways and she happens to have been married for 25 years this year to the love of her life, Paul, with whom she has 2 fine humans they've grown into young adults. And she is a vibrant happy woman who I met at the Vibrant Happy Women retreat. And I'm so honored to have you on, Michelle, welcome to the show.

Michelle Petitpas: Hi, Jen, good to talk to you rather than see you face to face, but it's nice to connect.

Jen Riday: Yeah. So you've grown your humans into 2 fine young adults. Tell us your kids names.

Michelle Petitpas: Dominique is our daughter, she's 22, and Patrick is our son, he's 20.

Jen Riday: Cool. Well, let's dive into a quote and then we'll hear more about you and your life journey.

Michelle Petitpas: So ever the high achiever, I actually have a dozen quotes that fit the bill. But I usually have just this overarching one that kind of has been the motto for my life. And some of you may recognize it. It's an easy one to remember, "Have courage and be kind," and that's from Cinderella.

Jen Riday: Aww! Nice.

Michelle Petitpas: But every year, I pick a verse usually from the Bible, and this year, it's, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Jen Riday: So what's that mean for you to renew your mind?

Michelle Petitpas: So, for me, it means that I have consciously made the decision to not stay stuck anymore; consciously made the decision to step out of the spot that I was in and move towards the spot that I want to be in, to live differently than I had lived before. And to do that, it means that I need to fill my mind with good things, lovely things, pure things; things that build me up rather than tear me down. So that's essentially focusing on positive things rather than negative things. I'm really blessed with having, I think, gotten a cheery outlook from my dad who has taught me that, "You can find the rainbow in the sky after the rain or you can find the silver lining in the cloud." So that's kind of how I live my life, but I was really stuck for a while, and I've come out of that stronger and better and a new





me. So that's what the transformation is about.

Jen Riday: Oh, I love transformation stories. It's kind of like HGTV where they remodel a house. So tell us more about the before and then how you got to this cheery after that you're talking about.

Michelle Petitpas: Okay, so it's a bit complicated, but essentially it involves an assault as a nurse in a hospital while I was working. And that happens regularly to nurses and health care providers, and sadly, it seems to be an expectation that we just put up with it because we're caregivers. So, for me, the assault was really, really bad. And it ended up with me being diagnosed with depression and PTSD and fibromyalgia. So add into that, sort of falling apart, not being able to go back into a hospital to work, working in a school system teaching French for a while, a cross-country move, multiple close family and friends deaths, and then resulting in gaining about 90 pounds from all of these stressors. I could add in that our kids also have some learning issues, so we really have had to work in a different way than other families sometimes. So after kind of getting to the point of, I reached out to multiple sources and couldn't seem to get out of my own way, I essentially would go to work, come home, and lay on the couch. And I was grateful that I was allowed that much energy. But my energy was so low that there were times that I didn't know if I was coming or going. And, honestly, it wasn't until about December, 2015 that I had a bit of a wake-up call. And that wake-up call really was that, I had a choice to live. I could choose to stay stuck where I was or I could choose to live the rest of the days of my life. You see, I get the choice to live. There are many people that I know that don't have that choice anymore; they're not here on this earth. So I had to come to the realization that, if I wanted to have more days, I needed to do something differently. Because if you keep doing what you've been doing, you're going to keep getting the results you've been getting.

Jen Riday: Hmm.

Michelle Petitpas: And those results weren't working for me. I've always been a positive person and most people would not realize how desperate I was. Not really happy to share it, but I will share that I contemplated suicide. I was so low that I didn't believe I was worthy of life anymore. And that will come as a shock for many people around me because the person that I portray outwardly to many people is someone of extreme confidence, of resilience, of energy, of well-spoken. But inside, like many women, I was dying a little bit every day. And I had to come to the point that I truly believed that I could do it; that everything was possible.

Jen Riday: How did you get there? I mean, like some people can't believe. How did you shift? That's a big one right there.

Michelle Petitpas: How did I shift? Well, so if you keep doing the things you've been doing, you're going to keep getting the things you've been getting, right?

Jen Riday: Right, right.

Michelle Petitpas: So I had to radically shift how I was doing things. I created a vision board with what



I wanted to become; things that I maybe didn't quite believe yet. So one of them was, "Losing weight is easy." I wasn't sure that that was true, but I'm here to tell you that, if you believe that losing weight is easy, you're going to get there much easier than if you believe losing weight is hard. It's like trying to go uphill with a bag of rocks on your back. If I keep saying, "It's hard, it's hard, it's hard," it's going to be. But if I keep saying, "I can do this. I believe I can do this. I'm going to do this. Let's do this," if I talked myself into it, it will be helpful. And I essentially did that, but there were some other things that I did. So I decided that I had to kind of take off the mask and ask for help. And part of that was receiving the help that had been offered to me. So my daughter had been asking over and over and over for me to go to the gym. You see, I was really athletic when I was younger. And somewhere along the line, I'm going to say about 17 years ago, I lost that passion because of the assault that happened and I didn't think I was worthy to keep going. But I know that there are ways that we can do things differently.

So I'm a person of faith. I grew up in a very traditional religious background. Somewhere along the line, I also received the message that, "You can have a relationship rather than a religion." So I went on a quest years ago to do that and that has helped me immeasurably, because whether you believe that you pray to a God or a creator or the universe or whatever you believe, if you do that on a regular basis, if for you it's meditating or sitting in silence, whatever it is, that's going to help get you through the next step. So one of the things that I do regularly is pray, and it sounds something like, "Help! I can't do this."

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Michelle Petitpas: "I need your help. Help me to be stronger." And I truly believe that what happened with me was 50% of it really truly was my mindset; that once I got out of my head and the negative stories I was telling about myself, that things would change. Because those stories really were stories that I had built up over time that probably weren't accurate. They might have been fragments of thoughts or beliefs that I had, and the energy around those, were really killing me. They really like day by day, the things that I was thinking in my head, I truly believe were part of my detriment. So once I started getting out of my head and just kind of letting that prayer language come regularly and easily for me, it got easier because that 50% of my head was shifting. So then the other bits for me to get to be more vibrant and more happy was that, I tweaked my food a bit. So I did some things that maybe are not popular in the world right now, but I had to try some things that were different. And one of those things was some intermittent fasting. Another one of the things was to focus on higher healthy fats, moderate protein, lower carb, with the focus of the carb being on vegetables, then on fruit, and then a little bit on green. And because of my fibromyalgia, which I believe really was created from trauma, I had to really dig deep and try to get rid of wheat out of my diet. So I've done that for the most part. I go gluten-free as much as I can, unless there's a really good chocolate cake around and I simply can't refuse it.

Jen Riday: (Laughs).

Michelle Petitpas: I mean, honest. I... you saw me; I can eat real food. I think we get stuck in that mode of thinking that we have to follow certain things inside a certain box. And if we just step outside the



box that we've built for ourselves, we're so much freer. And I can tell you, for me, just those little tweaks, things like I try to get probiotics. So I try to get mine in the form of kombucha that I brew here at home and drinking my water every day, drinking enough water with lemon in it to flush my system out; so that was another 25%. So the 50% was a mindset, the 25% was my food, and the other 25% was actually saying yes to my daughter and stepping outside of my comfort zone and going to the gym. In my 3x size body that I was at the time, I was in pain every step I took, and I was embarrassed. But she let me know that she still loved me. And I think that's part of the big message of it all is that, once somebody started believing in me as well, it made it easier. So when I say that, part of that has been my journey is setting up people around me for support. And my fitness junkies from Windsor, Nova Scotia has been an immeasurable support to me. In fact, I had them do a little challenge because we were on a podcast a while back and I sent them out a challenge to do 10 burpees, and they rocked it out. I've got videos coming to me from women all over the place with women doing burpees together.

Jen Riday: (Laughs).

Michelle Petitpas: It is fantastic because the exercise that I struggled the most with was a burpee.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Michelle Petitpas: And it was because, when I would go down to the ground, there was something on the ground that would trigger a flashback for me. So I really had a hard time doing the burpees. And the trainer, Cathy Johnston, said to me, "Do it off the wall. Do it off the table. Do it but off the chair. I don't care where you do it, but just get up and do it." Her belief in me, as well as the belief at the locker room here in Windsor that Katy Forehand and Janice Forehand are, just phenomenal women who teach classes there and own the gym, they believed that I could do it. They modified moves. They helped me figure out where my strengths were. Rather than focusing on what my limitations were, they focused on my strengths. So it made it really easy for me to want to go because now if I'm running late, I know that one of the women who go to some of the classes are going to set me up so that I can walk in and do what I have to do.

Jen Riday: Wow!

Michelle Petitpas: Yeah, it's... you have to set people around you as your support. So that was one of the other things that I've come to realize that, sometimes you need to find your support in non-traditional ways. So, for me, having been brought up in a church and then through the Girl Guide movement for years and years and years, I knew I had support from strong women around me. But sometimes you have to find support in other ways. And those particular ways, for me, really were by being real and authentic and telling people that I was struggling. I had to let my mask off a little bit, take down my shield, and let people get under my skin, which was really hard for me; understanding that, I think, women who've been assaulted, naturally put up a bit of a shield around themselves. And sometimes they can be everything for everybody else but not give themselves the attention that they need. So this particular group was just so fantastic, as well as, I go to a group called TOPS every





week; and that's called Taking Off Pounds Sensibly. And I used to go and I used to sit and not really do what I needed to do. I just went in sat and played the game. And eventually, I got the same results that many other people were getting; and that's that, they weren't really taking off pounds, they were going for a social visit every week.

So in December, 2015, I decided that I wanted to go back to a new year with a new attitude. I wanted to just live simply and dream big and be grateful and give love and laugh lots and work on me in a non-competitive, vibrant, happy, supportive encouraging way. So I had to learn that I could be the example for some of those other people. And, for me, it seemed a little bit difficult because some of these women are other than me. So the thought process in my head that I've been taught is that, you defer to your elders who are wiser than you, who are mentors to you. But in my case, that wasn't working as effectively. I needed to find people who were more like-minded. So I invited people to come along. I encouraged people to join me on my path. My husband, he had been the most phenomenal support that I could ever imagine. And part of that is because he sees the change in me. He sees a woman who was so broken and so defeated, who didn't want to live, to now a radical... like it's a complete about-face to a person who wants to come home and... and wants to spend time with my family and wants to spend time with my friends and wants to live.

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Michelle Petitpas: Once you finally get to the point that you want to live, you will do anything to get there. So part of that was adding that fun and adventure piece in that some of your listeners might have been on the vibrant happy Academy and heard Jill Payne and I talked about 'things to do to be fun and adventurous'. And today, one of my fun adventures was, I drove to Peggy's Cove all by myself, nobody with me. And I sat around the rocks for a little while. It was really windy and cold and absolutely fantastic because I could just not have any stress on me. I could think about what you and I were going to do here today, and come at this with just a different perspective because I had taken that time away to focus on me for a little bit. That's kind of how I've lived the past couple of years. And it's obviously catching on because people around me are making comments that completely blow me away because they see a reflection in me that, when I look in the mirror, I'm still looking at somebody who has got scars and who's got wounds. And for me to see what they see, I sometimes have to get them to reflect that back to me.

So just as I was preparing to talk to you today, I had a few people send me some information about what they saw; the change in me and how that came about. And I really think we all need to do that once in a while. We need to get together with people and we need to say, "Listen, I've screwed up and I know I've screwed up and I'm sorry. But can you tell me what's good about me? Can you show me what you still love about me?" and go forward together. I think we are meant to be in a, whatever word you want to call it; a sisterhood, a circle, an academy together, a tribe, a neighborhood, a community. Whatever you want to call it, we are meant to be together. And we go forward much farther when we lift each other up versus when we compete with each other and tear each other down.

Jen Riday: Yes. Isn't that true?





Michelle Petitpas: It is so true.

Jen Riday: Well, so how much weight have you lost, Michelle?

Michelle Petitpas: So as of this morning when I stood on the scale, I am down about 95 pounds from my highest weight.

Jen Riday: Way to go! That's phenomenal.

Michelle Petitpas: Thank you! I'll take that!

Jen Riday: Yeah! And you're living, as you want to live, and you want to live with energy and happiness and connection; so many changes.

Michelle Petitpas: Absolutely.

Jen Riday: So would you say that first step was just deciding, "I want to live," second step, putting yourself first, if you had to narrow it down?

Michelle Petitpas: I think so. I think it was, at some point in time, just deciding that I was worth it; that I love me enough to go forward.

Jen Riday: Yes! Yeah, wow! So what keeps you going? You know, some people try and do well for a while, but they don't stick with it as long as you have. What... do you think it's the community and the new identity around it?

Michelle Petitpas: I 100% believe with all my heart that 50% of it is the mindset, and the community is a piece of that mindset. So it's having the people in place. In my workplace, I'm a foot care nurse so my patients have seen a phenomenal change in me. And they're encouraging me and I'm making a change in lives every day because they're watching my example and making changes. In the gym, in my circle of friends, in my TOPS group, in my groups that I bump into once in a while, in my family; it's not having one particular spot, but it's having several spots that, if you are struggling, you have more than one avenue to go down. Making sure you've got some really close people in your lives. So I'm going to call them like your board of directors.

Jen Riday: Oh yeah.

Michelle Petitpas: If you have to pick 12 people in your life, who would you pick? Who would be sitting with you when you're falling apart?

Jen Riday: Wow.





Michelle Petitpas: Who would be sitting with you when you're cheering on your children in their marriages? Who would be sitting with you when you've got to bury a family member? We, unfortunately, have lived with some really big tragedies in our lives and everybody's got a story to tell. So who is going to be part of your story? Who are the characters in your life? And those are some of the things that have really pushed me forward as I work through some of these things. And I have a story that's just bursting forth. I've got a couple of books in progress. And it's exciting to look back and see how far I've come.

Jen Riday: Yeah

Michelle Petitpas: To know that I bumped into Vibrant Happy Women podcast because of one of my fitness junkies mentioning it. And by that, I've now enlarged my circle in immeasurable ways. You know, I've got friends now that are from St. Paul Minnesota and from New Jersey and all over the place, from Philadelphia, and it's just phenomenal. I remember thinking that I was living in a very small world. And somehow in the last, I'm going to say a couple of months even, my world has just expanded so much more as I feel gratitude. As I focus on the good rather than on the challenges, I see things going forward so much more clearer. I see that our paths have crossed for a reason and that we will forever be changed because we've met each other.

Jen Riday: Hmm! That's so amazing. And then it's just getting bigger and bigger, the circles, and now you're going to be an influencer. I love this.

Michelle Petitpas: It's fantastic.

Jen Riday: It is; it really is. Well, let's take a quick break for our sponsor and then come back and talk some more, and especially about some of your favorite things, being a Nova Scotian.

Michelle Petitpas: I'm eager to talk!

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(Interview resumes) [24:49]

Jen Riday: Okay, welcome back, Michelle, and let's jump in and talk about a few of your favorite things. So first I want to ask, tell us what it's like there in Nova Scotia because it's just not a place that's covered in the media or TV or movies. I can't think of a movie about Nova Scotia, but it's beautiful. I've seen your Facebook feed and I love it already.

[Laughter]

Michelle Petitpas: It is beautiful; it is beautiful. So we moved to a pretty small town in Nova Scotia called Windsor, which is about 45 minutes from Halifax. So most people have heard of Halifax, Windsor is going more westerly towards the Annapolis Valley. And it's... you know, geographically, we're





probably 5 minutes from the Bay of Fundy, the Avon River, which is part of the ocean, really. And I drove down to the South Shore beach, to Peggy's Cove. We're surrounded by water. There's not a whole lot of space that you couldn't get to water within 10 or 15 minutes. Now, it's not all ocean; there are a lot of freshwater lakes and we have a beautiful countryside. It really is a beautiful place. It is cold in the winter though. I want you to know that we get snow.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm. (Laughs)

Michelle Petitpas: We get things that other just don't understand.

Jen Riday: Well, so what do you do for fun in Nova Scotia?

Michelle Petitpas: What do I do for fun in Nova Scotia? We've got beautiful places to hike. We've got...

Jen Riday: Uh-huh, lots of nature.

Michelle Petitpas: ... water to kayak in.

Jen Riday: Ooh!

Michelle Petitpas: We've got... it's a beautiful spot to live out loud. There's... everything that you can do anywhere in the world, you can do in Nova Scotia.

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Michelle Petitpas: We really don't live in igloos.

[Laughter]

Michelle Petitpas: We live in houses like everybody else. You know, our world is so much bigger now that we can connect over the Internet and that we can connect over phone. We have such a lack of knowledge about where other people live. And Nova Scotia is really a fantastic place to live. And Windsor in particular is the birthplace of hockey.

Jen Riday: Oh! I didn't know that! Good to know!

Michelle Petitpas: Absolutely!

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Michelle Petitpas: Absolutely!

Jen Riday: Well, so let's talk about a few of your favorite things. So, Michelle, what does your morning





routine look like?

Michelle Petitpas: My morning routine changed over time from when the kids were young. Understanding my kids are a little older now from when I worked shift work; I don't work shift work anymore. Now, I often wake up and I might read in bed for a little while, pray, review the intentions that I had set the night before. So I always write things down the night before so that I can focus on good things while I'm sleeping.

Jen Riday: Nice.

Michelle Petitpas: I work out sometimes in the morning, but honestly, mornings haven't been my most energetic time. I'm a better sleeper now than I was. Working night shift, and for anybody out there who works night shifts, they'll understand that it messes up your system a little bit and you have to consciously make choices to manage your energy. So sometimes I do some affirmations. Sometimes those get done on video or audio in the car as I'm driving because I usually have to drive to start my day with my patients. On the way out the door, I hit the ground running by making a rocket fuel latte drink.

Jen Riday: Ah.

Michelle Petitpas: Which is one of my favorite recipes, and it's essentially coffee or tea with coconut oil or MCT oil, which is kind of powdered coconut oil, some cocoa butter, some peanut butter maybe, sometimes some hemp hearts, all thrown together in a magic bullet and blended up. And it looks like a latte when it's done and I pour that in a mug and drive out the door.

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Michelle Petitpas: So I drink that usually throughout the morning a little bit because I might not to be eating much in the morning. I have never been a person who really has enjoyed getting up and eating breakfast right off the bat; it just didn't sit well with me. And now I understand why, because that's not how my body works the best. My body works the best if I give it a little longer time to digest, and drink a rocket fuel latte, which it doesn't have any carbs in it, it only has good fats and some protein. So I'm not burning the glucose in my body the same way as I would be if I was eating carbs.

Jen Riday: Oh. So you mentioned intermittent fasting. When do you start to eat for the day and when do you stop eating?

Michelle Petitpas: So usually, I start around noon and I often end around 8 PM.

JJen Riday: Oh.

Michelle Petitpas: And my breaking my fast at noon can be a variety of things. Sometimes it's a protein shake. Sometimes it's a breakfast cookie, that I can send you a recipe for and we can add it to the





show notes; it's really fantastic. I put oatmeal, pumpkin seeds, and pumpkin, and some really good stuff in it. And it's one of those kinds of things that I can eat in the car on the way or I can sit down and eat it. It's not always the best to eat when you're driving, but it is the reality of some people.

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Michelle Petitpas: So I usually break my fast at noon. I really listen to my body now and eat than instead of what I used to do. I don't follow some of those same rules that we all get stuck in.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Michelle Petitpas: I really sought out what's the best thing for me.

Jen Riday: Yeah. What do you like to have for dinner, Michelle? Just a quick version.

Michelle Petitpas: So usually it's a salad of some sort with lots of things added in it. So it could be cranberries and walnuts and cheese and tomatoes and cucumbers, etc.

Jen Riday: Yum!

Michelle Petitpas: And some protein on it of some sort; so meat, fish, poultry, beef, pork, just change up the spices, cook it up and throw it on a salad. It's easy.

Jen Riday: Do you make the salad fresh every night or do you prepare them once a week?

Michelle Petitpas: No, I usually make it fresh every night, or even better, my favorite kitchen gadget is probably my husband.

Jen Riday: Yeah. (Laughs)

Michelle Petitpas: He works 4 days on and 4 days off. So on his 4 days off, he usually cooks. I'm really fortunate. Because I've always worked shift work, we set our marriage up that way. It's not my job or his job, it's our job to make sure we all get fed, we all get clean clothes, we all have the yard shoveled out; things like that, we really negotiate it.

Jen Riday: Good.

Michelle Petitpas: So if I'm home first, I do it; if he's home first, he does it. But he really doesn't like salad when it's been prepared too far in advance.

Jen Riday: Ah.

Michelle Petitpas: So we might make enough for 2 nights, but it wouldn't get eaten the third night.





Jen Riday: My husband is the same way. I wonder why that is? (Laughs)

Michelle Petitpas: I don't know. I eat whatever happens to be there if I don't have to prepare it sometimes. (Laughs)

Jen Riday: Yeah, exactly, exactly. Well, what's your favorite way to boost your mood if you're feeling low?

Michelle Petitpas: So my favorite way to relax is in my soaker tub with Epsom salts and essential oils and candles and a good book.

Jen Riday: Ah!

Michelle Petitpas: That is how I relax sort of to help my body feel the best, but really, and because I'm sure most of the women on here will understand this, my absolute favorite way to feel energetic is with my husband on a beach or on a couch or even better, naked in bed.

Jen Riday: (Laughs)

Michelle Petitpas: It's fantastic! I'm at the point in my life where it's okay for me to say that I love to be with my husband.

Jen Riday: Right.

Michelle Petitpas: I think not a lot of us are willing to step out and say, "That's what we're made for; we're partners together for a reason." And I love to spend time with him.

Jen Riday: Aaw, that's so great.

Michelle Petitpas: Yeah!

Jen Riday: Now, has your marriage always been so great?

Michelle Petitpas: No.

[Laughter]

Michelle Petitpas: So if you can imagine, I was a very angry woman who really was probably nitpicking and taking much of my sorrows and my journeys out on him. And I had to step back and really evaluate what I was willing to give and what I was willing to take, and we negotiated a whole lot of that. We've done some marriage courses. We did a Sunday evening from many years with a group in Fergus, Ontario. We spent a lot of time investing in our marriage. Now, having said that, it hasn't all been





easy and it hasn't all been roses. And I'm not really proud to say that I was the one who almost walked away at one point in time. Understanding that I was exhausted, I was hurt, the kids were struggling and I... I just I kept nitpicking about all the faults rather than looking for the good. And when I eventually realized that, "My husband is my helpmate. My husband has been put in my life to help me be the best person I can be," I am proud to say that we did the hard work. We were willing to sit down together and work through some things. And part of those things were following some examples that my parents and my husband's parents had set before us, and that's to make sure that, even if you don't have the money, that you do something together every week. If that thing together is sitting and watching a particular show on TV or going to a coffee shop and having a cup of coffee or walking in a park together, it doesn't have to cost money, but what it has to be is you speaking your spouse's love language.

Jen Riday: Ah!

Michelle Petitpas: My husband has figured out that I... probably most women, I would think, acts of service probably is really high on a lot of women's lists because we're tired. So if our husband is to sweep the floor or do the dishes, we want to do things to reward his good behavior. And when I started realizing that my husband was showing me love in a way that spoke to him, and when I started to realize that he just loves me, I didn't need to look for any farther. When I just started to accept that he loves me, everything changed.

Jen Riday: Ooh, yeah. Then you weren't needing and you could be in a partnership rather than this neediness, accepting that he loves you.

Michelle Petitpas: That's right.

Jen Riday: Yeah, that's great.

Michelle Petitpas: Right. So we did the hard work, and I'm so glad we did.

Jen Riday: Yeah. You spent the time, you invested the time; that's exactly. Well, so tell us about your favorite book, going back to favorites.

Michelle Petitpas: So, historically, I just loved books; all books, all the time. And I really like them in paper form. I do some reading on my tablet or on my phone, but I like the smell of a book and the feel of a book and the look of a book. Originally, I tell you that 'Anne of Green Gables' has been my favorite book of all time. And that's, I think, because, you know, there was a good East Coast story in that as well.

Jen Riday: Yeah, yeah, right.

Michelle Petitpas: Right now, anything by Brené Brown seems to be high on my list. And, honestly, I go back to the Bible quite regularly; it's got a lot of good stuff in it.





Jen Riday: Right, right, good; Green Gables, Brené Brown, the Bible. And so what is the best advice you've ever received?

Michelle Petitpas: The best advice I've ever received, I think it goes back to Cinderella, "Have courage and be kind." It doesn't cost you anything. You have the power to literally change someone's world by looking in their eyes, smiling, being authentic, real, genuine, supportive, wanting success for everyone. So I'd have to say really that that's the best advice that I've ever been given. Just have courage and be kind. Wherever you are, with whomever you are, doesn't matter, just kind.

Jen Riday: Yeah, yeah. I saw that in action with Michelle on the Vibrant Happy Women retreat. One of our servers at a restaurant, she would converse with them and she was all about really connecting with everyone. It was beautiful.

Michelle Petitpas: Just me!

Jen Riday: Yep, exactly. Well, so what does it mean for you, Michelle, to be a vibrant happy woman; a formula?

Michelle Petitpas: For me, it means, having courage, doing those things that maybe are scary but doing them anyway. Being kind to other people but to yourself as well, and doing consistent and persistent actions to get you to a happy place. You have to set yourself up for success. Step up, love yourself enough. So part of that, it could be being grateful. I regularly, every day, write down 3 things that I'm grateful for. And we actually, we did this for a long time around our supper table, and it was a way to my husband to communicate more. We'd ask, "What are the 3 best things about your day?"

Jen Riday: Ah, yeah.

Michelle Petitpas: And, you know, it's a fantastic way for everybody to talk about what's going on in their lives. And some days, if all you can find is, "I got to go to the bathroom by myself," that's a really fantastic thing.

Jen Riday: (Laughs)

Michelle Petitpas: You know, moms get stuck sometimes and you have to find joy in the journey. So I think you have to... and I've done this with many women over time. When somebody is being negative and down on themselves, I am often saying to them, "I want you to send me, every day, one thing that you've done for yourself today, and do it for the next 40 days. I guarantee you, when you start focusing on one little thing that you can do for yourself every day, it might be buying a lipstick, it might be going for a walk, having a bath, buying a friend a coffee and dropping it off, whatever, something that will get you to where you want to be."

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm. Michelle, this has been phenomenal, by the way. I just love you. I love your en-





ergy. I love the turnaround and transformation you've created. So let's have a challenge from you to our listeners and then you can tell us where they can find you, then we'll say goodbye.

Michelle Petitpas: So my challenge for our podcast listeners is to choose to live out loud while you are alive. Today is a great day to start living your dreams. You need to look what they are, write them down, do a vision board, connect with other women, create a vibrant happy community around you. And I'm so excited because I'm actually launching out and creating the Vibrant Happy Women Kindred Hearts Desert Club in our area. And it's so exciting to see women just light up. Just the name has lit some people up; and I am so excited. So I challenge our listeners to... to live out loud every day. Create the life you want because really, it is all up to you. And I do have a digital download that I'm sure you'll connect with through the podcast site. And it's a couple of pages of just some work for you to drill down to be able to do some of those things of how to live out loud every day.

Jen Riday: Ooh, nice! So I'll put a link to that on our show notes page at jenriday.com/109. And so if they want to connect with you, they can grab this digital download and then that will connect them?

Michelle Petitpas: Yes. So my name is a little bit hard to spell, but Jen will have it written correctly on the podcast show notes.

[Laughter]

Jen Riday: Nice. Yeah, and Petitpas, I'm sure they're like Peti... yeah, yeah, yeah. Show notes page, jen-riday.com/109.

Michelle Petitpas: Show notes page! (Laughs). So the very last thing I want to tell you is, because I was down at Peggy's Cove today, I want to tell everybody, "Be the lighthouse for somebody else. It's okay if you get off course, but know that that light is always within you. And be that light for someone else because you might truly be the only light that someone sees in the run of a day."

Jen Riday: "Be the lighthouse." Well, Michelle, you are definitely a lighthouse. Thank you so much for being on the show. We love you and we love your energy.

Michelle Petitpas: You are welcome, and I am very grateful to be part of the Vibrant Happy Women tribe.

Jen Riday: Thank you so much, Michelle, this was fantastic.

Michelle Petitpas: You are so welcome!

Jen Riday: Take care.

Thank you so much for joining Michelle and I, and be sure to check out the show notes page for all the links of everything Michelle talked about, including that digital download at jenriday.com/109.





Also, be sure to fill out the Vibrant Happy Women survey at jenriday.com/survey. By filling out that questionnaire, you'll be entered to win a two hundred \$200 gift card from amazon.com. And, again, that's at jenriday.com/survey. I will be back next time with a happy bit all about teaching your kids the vibrant happy way, and then next week, I'll be back with the amazing Anne Adametz, a local Wisconsinite who I love and I got to meet; oh my gosh. There's so many amazing people that come together through this podcast and I want to thank all of you for listening and for being amazing in your own right. This is the Vibrant Happy Women movement. Share your light, be that lighthouse like Michelle said, and I will see you next time. Take care.

