

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 116:

Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

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J: You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 116. I'm talking with Gretchen Rubin today, all about choosing the bigger life. Stay tuned.

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

J: Hey there, welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women. I'm Dr. Jen Riday and I'm so glad you're here. Last week, I chatted with Allie Casazza all about de-cluttering and intentional simplicity. I don't know about you, but I'm ready to be on that minimalist train and I'm taking action to make that happen. If you didn't get to listen to that episode, you can listen at jenriday.com/115. And today, I am so excited to bring you Gretchen Rubin, author of 'The Happiness Project', 'Better Than Before' and 'The Four Tendencies'. I've talked a lot on the podcast about 'The Four Tendencies' and how much it has helped me with my interactions with my kids. My family seems to be a combination of questioners and rebels, and you need to interact with people like that in a slightly different way. I can't wait for you to hear this interview with Gretchen and learn more about how the four tendencies can help your family as well. But first, I have some big amazing news that makes me so happy. No, I'm not having a baby, I'm done with that, but I'm so excited to announce that the Vibrant Happy Women club is open for enrollment. Take a listen.

[Audio clip begins]

Club member 1: Before, I felt like a crappy mom, a crappy wife, and I just kind of was in my own little funk.

Club member 2: I have people every day coming up with, "Why are you so much happier? You are so happy, something's going on."

"Yeah, Jen Riday happened."


J: Hey there I'm Dr. Jen Riday and I'm the host of the Vibrant Happy Women podcast. You have something important to do; you're not just here to sacrifice everything for everyone else. You have talents and gifts and a purpose and I want you to live it, and that's what the Vibrant Happy Women Club is all about.

Club member 3: Since joining the group, my husband even says I'm more pleasant.

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



Club member 4: The level of support that I feel from these women is almost indescribable. During the season of life where you need to do something for yourself...

Club member 5: Make your life more complete and meet some awesome women.

Club member 6: If anyone who's considering this program, just go for it.

J: As we add light through investing time in ourselves and that light spreads, our family starts to pick up on the happiness that we're creating. Join me in the Vibrant Happy Women club and start healing your heart, start healing your life and finding you again.

[Audio clip ends]

J: I have a huge smile on my face right now because this has been months in the making and I am so excited to invite you inside. You can learn more at vibranthappywomenclub.com. And now, without further ado, let's go ahead and jump into this awesome interview with Gretchen Rubin, all about living a bigger life and about how the four tendencies can help you have a happier life and family.

Gretchen Rubin is one of today's most influential and thought-provoking observers of happiness and human nature. She's the author of many books including the blockbuster, New York Times bestsellers, 'The Four Tendencies', 'Better Than Before', and 'The Happiness Project'. She has an enormous readership both in print and online, and her books have sold almost 3 million copies worldwide in more than 30 languages. On her top ranking award-winning podcast, Happier; with Gretchen Rubin, she discusses happiness and good habits with her sister, Elizabeth Craft, she's been interviewed by Oprah, eaten dinner with Daniel Kahneman, walked arm-in-arm with the Dalai Lama, and had her work written up in a medical journal, and even been an answer on the game show, Jeopardy. Gretchen Rubin started her career in law and was clerking for Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, when she realized she wanted to be a writer. Raised in Kansas City, she lives now in New York City with her husband and they have 2 daughters; a college freshman and a 7th grader. Welcome to Vibrant Happy Women.

G: I'm so happy to be talking to you.

J: Yeah, and all of my listeners seem to love your podcast so they're going to be so excited that I have you on this show. But let's start out with a quote you want to share with our listeners today.


G: I have so many quotations; I love, love quotations, I have hundreds of quotations. I actually have this newsletter that I send out every day which is like a happiness quotation which people can sign up for if they love quotations as much as I do. But the one that I live by the most is this motto, "To be Gretchen." Like, to me, that sort of is the succinctly summary of everything that I want to remember which is that, I'm going to be happier when I stay true to my own nature, my own values, my own interests. And so I just have to remember to be Gretchen; which is harder than it sounds.

J: Totally.

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



G: That's my motto, yeah.

J: So do you imagine yourself in a bubble? What does it look like to be Gretchen? What's the visual that goes with it?

G: You know, it's interesting. I'm not a very visual person and so I don't really have a visual, but it's more this idea of like taking it back to the center of like not getting pulled out by what I think should be true or what I wish for true or what other people expect, but really just what's true for me. And it's... it's a hard thing to do because, on the one hand, I want to accept myself, but on the other hand, I want to expect more for myself. So sometimes, I do have to do things that are uncomfortable or feel outside my range or outside my zone or that make me feel insecure or frustrated. But it's always like, "Are those things the right things for me or somehow, have I tried to do something for other reasons, not because it's Gretchen, but because I feel like I should try to be something that I'm not?" And it's... it's a very hard thing sometimes to know. So, for me, it's always this idea of like bringing it back to the center; like, what is really true for me.

J: Yeah. Well, so you grew up in Kansas City and obviously, like all of us, your parents probably expected things of you, try to impose maybe a few values on you that maybe you haven't kept to this day. So tell us a little kind of history of how you learn to be Gretchen; what that looked like to find yourself essentially.

G: Well, I don't think that the outer expectations that are not Gretchen came from my parents because my parents.


J: Yeah.

G: Because my parents are actually very, very kind of... they want me... and then my sister and I've talked about this, you know, they wanted us to do what we wanted to do but they weren't that... they didn't forcefully try to get us to do things. They had high expectations of sort of general excellence, but they didn't have a lot of ideas like, "You need to do this. You need to do that." I mean...

J: Really? Lucky!

G: Yeah. And I would say one thing that's interesting is like my parents never talk about their values. And like a lot of people will talk about how important they think it is to talk about values to their children, my parents never talked about their... I mean, they just lived their values, but they didn't ever really like explicitly talk about it much. And so that's... that's just sort of interesting for me to think about. You know, I think my expectations that are not Gretchen are much more like me feeling like I should be a certain way like, "This is what's more legitimate," or, "This is what I should do," or, "This is what I can do, and because I can do it, I should do it."

J: Ah, yeah.



G: Like everybody thinks this is a great opportunity; how can I not take advantage of that opportunity? But then I realize like, that's... then you're just living up to somebody else's fantasy of what you should be and that's, in the end, very unsatisfying. So I figured it out the hard way.

J: Figured it out the hard way. So you were clerking for justice O'Connor and then, you know, you gave that up, and that was definitely probably a social 'should'; that's amazing, right? But then you decided, "I'm going to be a writer." How did you reach that decision? Where did you learn to go inward and identify who you really are?

G: Well, it was interesting; it was a lot of things coming together. And I think one of the things is that, many people who are writers, but this is true in many professions, like it's really interesting actually; when you ask around, many people feel this way, that there's almost a compulsion to do something where you feel like this must be done, this is almost like your destiny or something. In a way, it's very exciting. In a way, you feel kind of like you don't have a choice, it's like this is the thing that you must do. And I think, looking back, I'd always prepared myself to be a writer, but I didn't see a way for me to be a writer. I didn't want to be an academic writer, I didn't want to be a journalist, I didn't want to write fiction or poetry or plays; I didn't really see a place for myself in what... so I sort of had no aim. But then, when I was clerking for justice O'Connor, I had an idea for a book. And it was like, once I had that idea and I remembered the moment when I had it, like it hit me like a lightning bolt, I immediately started researching this subject. And that's something that I will often do and I still do to this day. I will research, research, do so much research on a subject and sometimes it burns itself out kind of my interest. Like, I just went through this obsession with Dolly Parton.

J: (Laughs)

G: And like now I made my peace with the life of Dolly Parton, like I know everything I need to know, but I know a lot more than I did 2 weeks ago because I became obsessed with her.

J: Oh yeah. But that would be so hilarious if... to me, if you suddenly had a book on Dolly Parton among your other books. (Laughs)


G: I mean, you know, there is a lot to be said about... like, we can talk about Dolly Parton. But...

J: (Laughs)

G: So this was big. This one was big and I was doing tons of research and taking tons of notes and doing it in, you know, after work, on the weekends, and it was just getting bigger and bigger. And it ultimately became my first book; it was called 'Power Money Fame Sex: A User's Guide'. It's kind of the opposite of the 'Happiness Project'.

J: (Laughs)

G: It was a tremendously fun book to write. But... so what happened was, once I had that idea, it was



like it was less that I was leaving law and more that I was being pulled toward something. It was like, "I want to write this book and I can't help but write it." And I'm writing it in my free time and I'm doing everything a person would do to write a book. And then finally I was like, "Writing books is something that some people do as a job. They don't do it in their free time, they do it as their job." My sister, by then, had already become a professional writer, so it's someone very close to me that was a professional writer. And then I... you know, the more I started thinking about it and the more my research sort of started to just balloon, you know, at a certain point I thought, "You know, I would rather fail as a writer than succeed as a lawyer at this point, and I need to... this is a moment when I need to take my shot; like, I need to really try." And maybe I will fail, but I was worried that if I took another major law job, that then I would never really try writing.

J: Hmm.

G: Because I would be so far down. It was the logical time to make a jump and I was like, "I better take my chance because this is the chance. This is the right time to take a risk."

J: Mm-hmm. Well, so let's talk about what it looked like for you... so you wrote the book, 'Power Money Fame Sex: A User's Guide', then how long before that itch started again where you felt that compulsion to write the 'Happiness Project' or..?

G: Immediately. Now I've been writing books ever since, so I switched right then. Yeah, I got a agent, got a book contract and then I wrote 'Power Money Fame Sex' then I wrote a biography of Winston Churchill called 'Forty Ways to Look at Winston Churchill', wrote a book called 'Forty Ways to Look at JFK'. I've talked about obsession. For years, I was obsessed with why owners would destroy their own possessions; this is like a question that comes up a lot in the law, the questions of ownership, possession, property; I was obsessed with that. I wrote a little book about that which was actually an art book that I did with an artist about this idea of profane waste, which finally exorcised me of that obsession, and then I wrote 'The Happiness Project'.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: So I had been writing for quite some time and had embraced the life of being a full-time writer at that point.

J: What did that look like with young children; to write?

G: Great. I mean, you know, for me, it's always been a full-time job; so, you know, I work at it the way a person would work at a full-time job.

J: Ah, so you didn't have to blend it, you just put them in childcare and..?

G: Yeah, I mean, they went to nursery school really early.



J: Mm-hmm.

G: And, yeah, and I had childcare, yeah. So, yeah, like many people where both parents work full-time, yeah.

J: Awesome. Well, so your life just sounds like one success after another, tell us about a time where you hit a low point and how you were able to shift out of that and keep going.

G: Well, one failure that was super, it turned out to be super important to me, and it's like, you know, people always say like, "Oh, you learned the most from your failure," and you're like, "Oh, yeah, that sounds like... that sounds good but I, you know, it doesn't feel that way when it's happening." But this is really a good example of that; like, this really worked the way they say it would work. So, as I said, I had written this book called 'Forty Ways to Look at JFK', which was sort of his short unconventional biography of JFK. And I loved writing this book; I mean, I really loved writing that book, it was a joy to write. But the thing is, it did not find its audience; that is what your editor tells you if your book is a big flop, "It did not find its audience," which mean, you know, nobody bought the book. And so it was a big... and that was, you know, for me as a writer that... you know, and you work in a book for a year, you know, so it's sort of a big thing that's driving toward a big splash and then it's kind of like then, whatever happens, happens.

And so it's not like a job where you kind of like do or don't get a promotion where it's sort of like an evolution. It's like something where there's really a lifecycle to a book, and the book has its fate. And so we didn't succeed and what that taught me though... so I was like, "I have to understand what happened and I have to understand how I feel." So what I felt was powerless. I had no way to tell anybody about my book. I mean, I knew that there were all these people in the world who were fascinated by a JFK, but I couldn't talk to them about it, I couldn't tell them about my book; they probably just didn't even know that my book was out there. Like, maybe they didn't want to read it, which was fair enough; my booklet was kind of an idiosyncratic biography. But my thing was like, "But no, these people don't even know that it's there." And so I became very focused on this idea of like, "Is there a way that I could have a direct connection with an audience? Is there a way that I can talk to people who are interested in the same things that I'm interested in?"

J: Hmm.

G: And I was very fortunate because this was... I went from the JFK book to 'The Happiness Project' and right at that time was when blogging was becoming something that many people could do even if they weren't techy. You know, it was like simple enough at this point that even someone like me could do it. And because of 'The Happiness Project', one of the things I had to assign myself, because the whole thing was an experiment, I had to do an experiment of doing something novel and challenging.

J: Right.

G: Which I didn't want to do. I like familiarity and mastery, but I had to test the hypothesis, the thing that

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>

the research shows that novelty and challenge make people happier. So it's like, "I really want to be able to directly connect with an audience, I needed something novel and challenging, why don't I start a blog?" And I was comforting myself at the thought that no one would ever see this blog.

J: (Laughs)

G: And so we didn't matter if it was bad. And then, oh my gosh, turns out it was this tremendous engine of happiness for me, and it did allow me to connect with an audience. And ever since then... and I gained so much from it; like, from being connected to an audience and people who are interested in the same subject. But the thing is, if that book had not failed, I don't know that I would have ever thought, "Oh, I need to be able to connect with an audience," and I might never have built all the infrastructure that, in the years since, has become so crucial to me. Maybe at some point I would have, but maybe I wouldn't have. And so really, I look back and I'm like, "That was the luckiest failure that I ever had because it was really this wake-up call that I had to do something differently; that I had to find a solution to something because what I was doing wasn't working."

J: So do you still write on your blog?

G: Yes, I've done it for more than 12 years, yeah. And it's evolved; like, it looks very different, it's organized differently, the way I write on it is different. But now, I post there at least a couple times a week.

J: Hmm.

G: There have been some times where I posted 5, 6 times a week. For years I posted mostly 5 or 6 times a week.

J: So when you're writing each day, do you spend time writing for your blog, set up certain amounts of time or do you just write when... whatever you feel like that day?

G: You know, I'm a person that has a lot of kind of internal... like, I don't need a lot of specific deadlines accountabilities, so I just know what I need to get done and I just get it done on the right time. I don't... I... like I know what has to happen in a day and I sort of sorted out almost like... you know, I just sort of know how I need to do something. Like if I need to... like, let's say I have a podcast episode that's going to go live tomorrow, well, I need to get the show notes loaded so that, if somebody looks up something from the podcast but... bang, it's there on the blog already.

J: Yeah, right.

G: So I just know like, "Well, I could do it in the morning. I could do it in the afternoon. But my afternoon, I'm going to be doing this podcast interview, so I better do it in the morning so that I don't run out of time."

J: Right, right.

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



G: You know? That kind of thing.

J: Right.

G: So I just fit it all in together. Yeah.

J: And when did you start your podcast?

G: Three years ago.

J: Okay, so tell our listeners more about your podcast in case they're not familiar with it? What do you like to talk about?

G: Hmm.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: So it's called Happier with Gretchen Rubin. So spoiler alert, it's about how to be happier. And my co-host is my sister, Elizabeth Craft, who's a very successful TV writer and producer living in LA. And so it's fun to do with my sister because like we don't let each other get away with anything; you know, like we know each other so well. And it's fun to talk about... you know, we get along incredibly well, but we're different; we're very different.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: So we have sub segments that recur each time. Like we always have a 'try this at home', which is like a concrete manageable tip that people can try in their everyday lives to be happier. We always talk about a happiness hack. That's like some little thing that just can make you happier; not a big thing, but just something like, if it's a... like we talked about the 'sleep with me' podcast, which is all about... it's like this guy tells these like slow, boring stories that help you go to sleep.

J: (Laughs)

G: It's just like, if you have trouble with insomnia. It's like my daughter, Eliza, will listen to 'sleep with me'. It just helps you... so it's like little quick things, like quick fixes, fun fixes.


J: Yeah.

G: And we always give each other... we give ourselves either a demerit or a gold star so that's something that we did that was a Happiness detractor or something or someone or somebody who like was a happiness booster. And then we have other things that rotate like a 'know yourself better' question or a four tendencies tip or an interview or a 'happiness stumbling block', where we talk about like a common

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



problem in happiness and how we think about it. So... but it's just fun because it's... it's just a chance to talk to my sister about all this stuff. And then also, we get so many ideas and suggestions and questions from listeners; so that's super fun as well, as I'm sure you know, it's so fun to engage with your audience.

J: Yeah, totally. Well, so if you had to give yourself a title, you talked a lot about happiness these days, what are you, 'the happiness guru'? What's your title that you would call yourself?

G: That is what I am often called. The New York Times called me 'the queen of the self-help memoir'.

J: Nice!

G: Which I like being Queen.

J: (Laughs)

G: I would say my work is self helpful more than self health, but yeah, I don't know what I would call myself. Yeah, 'the happiness...

J: Nice.

G: Elizabeth, my sister, calls me a happiness bully.

J: (Laughs). Happiness bully!

G: Because sometimes, I get a little bit too insistent with my happiness advice and ideas, so I have to hold myself back sometimes from being... coming on a little bit too strong.

J: How has that looked with your girls and your husband's; being the happiness guru or bully? (Laughs)

G: You know, I really do hold myself back; I mean, especially with my daughters because, you know, it's interesting, people often ask them like do they feel pressured to be happy... or like do I feel pressure to be happy, and 100% not; like, no. Part of being happy is acknowledging when you don't feel happy and allowing other people not to feel happy and to understand what's... why that is and not to try to talk them out of it or certainly bully them out of it. You know, but I think my family has benefited tremendously because one of the things that working on my happiness has helped me with so much as I just behave myself so much better. Like I'm... I can have a really quick temper and I've done a lot of things to try to keep myself calmer and more lighthearted and to be... you know, to really think about having fun. I can get very like driven and like very focused on getting things accomplished and it's like, "No, you know, this is supposed to be fun and we need to take time and we need to plan fun things." And so I think they've really benefited, just because I think I'm probably a lot more fun to be around now that I behave myself better. Get more sleep; I need my sleep, you know... oh! Like, my daughter's desperately wanted a dog; desperately, desperately wanted a dog a couple years ago.

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>

J: Uh-huh.

G: And I did not want a dog. I'm like, "I don't... I had a dog growing up, it was great, but like I don't want the work. I know it's a hassle. It's like every day; like, we're signing up for... you know, this is like a big commitment. If you travel, it's just like..." you know, I just didn't want to do it. But then, because I know from my happiness research, I was like, "Okay." Another motto that I have for myself along with, "Be Gretchen," is, "Choose the bigger life."

J: Mm-hmm.

G: And different people have different ideas of what the bigger life would be. And I was like, for our family, in truth, the bigger life is to get the dog; that would be the bigger life for us. And... you know, and I also thought about, you know, all the research ancient philosophers and contemporary scientists say, "The most important thing for happiness is relationships," and a relationship with the dog is very, very valuable relationship, and certainly a relationship that my daughter's yearned for. And I was like, "Well, it's going to be a relationship and relationships make people happier," and I also do that novelty and challenge; make people happier. And I was like, "This is something new. We've never done this; it'll be like a whole family adventure." So we did get a dog, Barnaby, and it's been great. I mean, and the thing is, I think, had I not done all this research in happiness, I might really have stood my ground and said, "No, it's just not worth the effort," whereas now, I'm like, "You know what? Let me think about this," apply what I know, and in the end, it helped me make a decision that really was the happier decision for my family. I'm not saying everybody would make the same decision for the same reasons, but for us, it was the right decision. So that helped, you know, just knowing how to think about it.

J: Wow, that's a big shift, for me, at least choose; the bigger life. I'm still in the phase of preserving my energy because I have 6 kids, but yeah, I'm going to try that choose...

G: (unclear) [20:48] ... the Olympics.

J: (Laughs)

G: That's (unclear) [20:51].

J: Choose the bigger life.

G: that's a bigger life already, yeah.

J: There we go; I'm off the hook.


(Advertisement) [20:57]
(Interview resumes) [23:50]

J: Well, let's talk a little bit about the four tendencies. I'll let you introduce it for those who might not be

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Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



familiar with it, but then we can talk about maybe what type you would say you are and your kids and your spouse and how that looks in your family to blend all of those tendencies.

G: Yeah. So the four tendencies divides people into upholders, questioners, obligors and rebels. And I'll give a brief description, and most people can tell what they are from this brief description and also like a lot of the people around them. But there is a quiz if you want to go to my site, gretchenrubin.com, you can look for the quiz, search for the quiz, or go to happiercast.com/quiz and it will take you right to the quiz. Like, 1.3 million people have taken this quiz now. It's free, it's quick, but like I say, a lot of people don't even need to take the quiz because once you hear the categories, it becomes pretty obvious. So it has to do with how you respond to expectations, which sounds boring, I know, but it turns out to be really juicy. And we all face 2 kinds of expectations. Outer expectations, like a work deadline or a request from a friend, and then inner expectations, like my own desire to keep a new year's resolution, my own desire to get back into playing the guitar.

So upholders, the first category, they readily respond to outer and inner expectations. They meet the work deadlines, they keep the New Year's resolution without much fuss. They want to know what other people expect from them, but their expectations for themselves are just as important. Questioners question all expectations. They'll do something if they think it makes sense. So they're always looking for reasons and justification. They make everything an inner expectation. If it meets their standard, they'll do it. If it fails their standard and they don't think it makes sense, they will resist, and they will typically object to anything that is arbitrary, inefficient, irrational. Then there are obligors. Obligors readily meet at our expectations, but they struggle to meet inner expectations. And I got my first insight into this tendency when a friend said to me, "I know I would be happier if I exercised. And when I was in high school, I was on the track team and I never missed track practice, so why can't I go running now?" Well, now, I know. When she had a team and a coach expecting her to show up, no problem, but when she was just trying to go on her own, she struggled. And then finally rebels.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: Rebels resist all expectations; outer and inner. Like, they want to do what they want to do in their own way, in their own time. They can do anything they want to do. They can do anything they choose to do. But if you ask or tell them to do something, they're very likely to resist.

J: (Laughs)


G: And they typically don't even like to tell themselves what to do. Like, they typically don't like to make to-do lists or they don't like to like sign up for a 10:00 AM yoga class on Saturday because they're like, "I don't know what I'm going to want to do on a 10 AM on Saturday. Like why would I bind myself?" Now, maybe they would, but it's rare, so usually, they... the interesting thing is they're not the same number of all the tendencies. Obligor is the biggest tendency. For both men and women, it is the biggest tendency. You either are an obligor or you have many obligors in your life.

J: Really?

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



G: And the next biggest is questioner. Rebel is the smallest tendency. It's very conspicuous, you know it when you see it, but it's not that many people. And... but my tendency, I'm an upholder and my tendency is only slightly larger. And many, many things became clear to me when I realized, "Not that many people are like me. I'm kind of a part of it like an extreme personality type, and there aren't that many upholders out there." And so those are the four tendencies.

J: Oh, that's awesome. So what percentage of people are obligors? Do you know the percentages?

G: Yeah. Gosh, I should have them memorize; I think it's 41%.

J: Oh yeah, that's high.

G: Yeah. So it's a lot; it's a lot. And then like something like rebel, I think is 17%; so that gives you a sense of the order of magnitude, and then 19% is upholder and then everybody else's questioner.

J: Okay. And what about your spouse and kids, what are they?

G: Mmm! My husband is a questioner.

J: (Laughs)

G: And so many things became clear to me when I realized he was a questioner. And it got rid of so much conflict in our relationship because I just understood like, he's like this because he's a questioner. He's like this with everybody; it has nothing to do with me. You know, a lot of times questioners can make people feel like they kind of have to defend their decisions.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: Like my husband won't do something if he doesn't understand why. And, to me, as an upholder, if he emailed me and was like, "Buy toothpaste," I would be like, "Okay," and I would just do it; you know, if I could, I would just do it. I don't need to know why like, "Oh, I'm going on a trip and I only..."

J: (Laughs)

G: "You know, my blah-blah," who cares? Whatever. It's like enough for me that you asked. But my husband's not going to do anything if he doesn't understand why. And like, I remember I was filling out this bureaucratic form and it asked me for his work address, which I did not know. So I called him up and I was like, "What is your work address?" and he said, "Why do you want to know?"

J: (Laughs)

G: And I was like, "Please just answer a simple question," you know, "Like why is it a discussion?" But

now, I realize he just needs to know why. I mean, he's just not going to answer if he doesn't even know why. And I don't have to feel... I just... now I should have said to him, "Hey, I'm filling out that boring form, what's your work address?" and he would have told me, "No problem." So now I just know, you know... or like if I say to him, "What time are we leaving for brunch?" he doesn't want to answer me. A lot of times, questioners don't like to answer questions; weirdly, ironically.

J: (Laughs)

G: Yes, it's ironic; I get it. But if I say to him, "What time are we leaving for brunch? Because I'm wondering if I have time to go to the gym," then he's like, "Oh, that's a good reason. I'm not going to just answer some random question, but I understand that you have a good reason for wanting to know the answer, and therefore I will answer." And so I just always now layer in this justification. But it's interesting like, especially with children, it's very poignant to me to hear from many questioner children and questioner adults about their own childhood how often like people just don't explain to children why they should do something, and then these questioner children refused to do it. I was just talking to a guy a couple weeks ago, he played on the soccer team he loved playing soccer, but his coach made him do all the same kind of drills that the regular team did, even though he was a goalie. And so he said to the coach, "I'm a goalie. I think I should have different drills because I have a different skill set than everybody else on the team, and so I should do different drills," and the coach said, "No, everybody on my team does the same drills." And the guy's like, "Well, that doesn't make any sense, so I quit."

J: (Gasps) Wow! (Laughs). Okay.

G: The thing is, that coach could easily have said something like, "I can see why you think that, but I'll tell you, I've studied the training methods of the Olympic team and they've shown..." or, "You may think that it doesn't matter, but..." you know, like does the coach have a reason? Because he should have just told the kid the reason, or if he didn't have a reason, maybe the kid has a point. It's like, "You know what, kid? Maybe you should do some different drills. Maybe we do need to work on different skills for you. Let's think about like what the skills would be.

J: Yeah.

G: It's a perfectly legitimate question. But just saying like, "I'm the coach and that's what I say," well, that's not legitimate to a questioner and they won't get with the program.

J: Right.

G: If you say, "Why do I have to memorize the multiplication tables?" or, you know, "Why do I have to switch to this software program if I don't think it makes sense?" It's like, you've got to give them their answers or they're not going to get with the program. And that's what I've learned with my husband. Give him the justification that he needs, let him understand why I'm asking him to do certain things and he's very cooperative. If he doesn't understand, he's not...



[Laughter]

J: Right.

G: ... cooperative when I want him to be. So, you know, that's got rid of a lot of tension.

J: Yeah. What are his thoughts of you as an upholder? Like, does he have a nickname for you? I don't know; you know what I mean?

G: Well, it's interesting because I think my husband puts a lot of... I would say as a person in general, and this comes out in his questioner side too, he's a person who puts a very, very high emphasis on self-discipline.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: And as an upholder, self-discipline is like one of the things that you really have. In fact, one of the mottos of the upholder tendency is that, "Discipline is my freedom." So one thing that's good is I think my husband would be very uneasy if you lived with somebody who did not have a lot of self-discipline...

J: Mm-hmm.

G: ... or like who didn't follow through when... like, if I say, "I'm going to do this," he knows that he doesn't have to check on it, he doesn't have to ask me, it just like... it gets done. And that's just something that he values very highly.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: And basically, he does the same, and I value it very highly. And so I think he probably finds it like an easier kind of relationship that he might with other tendencies.

J: Yeah.

G: It's a helpful match for both us.

J: Yeah. Oh, that's great. And your girls, what are their tendencies?

G: Well, one of my daughter's is an upholder and so I totally get her 100%. And she was obviously an upholder from very young. Sometimes you can tell the tendencies very young. Sometimes it's harder to tell my older daughter, who's now a freshman in college as you mentioned, I couldn't tell for a long time what she was because, you know, children aren't really economists in the way that adults were, and it wasn't clear to me. I knew she was either an obligor or a questioner; I couldn't tell which. Upholder and rebel are kind of extreme. So I knew she wasn't a rebel, I knew she wasn't an upholder, but she's turned out to be a questioner.

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



J: Ah, okay.

G: So we have 2 of 2 things in our family, but I definitely talked to people who have like 1 of everything, you know?

J: Hmm.

G: So it's definitely... you can get a big mix.

J: That's interesting. Well, I'll confess, my family is a blend of all questioners and rebels. And so... (Laughs)

G: Interesting! And what are you?

J: I'm a questioner.

G: Okay.

J: Yeah, yeah.

G: And usually when rebels pair up, they pair up with obligors; not always, but usually. Are you married to an obli... to a rebel or are you married to a fellow questioner?

J: I can't tell if he's a rebel or questioner.

G: Mm, yeah.

J: Yeah.

G: So let me ask you this; here's the question. If you asked him to do something, is his response more likely to be, "Why should I?" or is his response more, "You can't tell me what to do,"?

J: He won't use either phrase, but there's always resistance. I feel it in his energy and the response will be, "Maybe." (Laughs)

G: Okay, right.


J: And so I suspect a really strong questioner or that rebel. But see, he does meet inner expectations. He has a successful career and he meets his obligations with our kids and he'll do all the things he needs to do. So I still think maybe he a questioner. Would that be accurate?

G: Well, you know, sometimes it can be hard to tell because also, rebels put a very high emphasis on living up to their values and their identity. And so if you have somebody... if you have a rebel who's really

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



ambitious or a rebel who puts a really high value on being like a loving considerate parent, they will live up to that because they're choosing to do it. But it's slightly different because, they're not doing it because they're supposed to, they're doing it because they choose to do it. And they might be like, "Well, I don't choose to do that," you know, and there's just sort of a different... it's a different way of thinking.

J: Hmm.

G: But you're right, questioners and rebels overlap in that they both readily meet inner ex... they both resist outer expectations and so it can sometimes be hard to tell if someone's a questioner who tips to rebel or a rebel who tips to questioner.

J: Ah.

G: Because those can look very much alike. It looks very much the same in the world; it can be hard to know if you don't know really how they're thinking about things.

J: Do you think that kids can learn to be a rebel or do you just hold to the idea that it's born in a person?

G: I mean, I really am a strong believer in the genetic roots of personality, and I think this is part of that; I think that you bring this into the world with you. So I don't think it's a function of upbringing or birth order or generation or, you know, religion or anything like that. I think that you are... you're born a way, but of course your context will matter. If you're in a, you know, like say rebel, you could be a rebel growing up in a household where that's either like embraced or at least accepted.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: Or you could be born into a family where that is really... like they really are trying to break your rebel spirit and really do not want to see you behave that way. So of course, it's going to change the way you're going to come out, it's going to change your decisions, it's going to influence your growth because you're in a different environment, but I still think that you still have that from the... you brought that into the world.

J: Hmm, wow! Well, then that makes me feel better because I feel like I'm raising a household of alphas... (Laughs)

G: Mmm!

J: ... who all... all resist out our expectation from teachers, from each other, from the chores.

G: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

J: So I have it is so much finesse. (Laughs)

Vibrant Happy Women

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



G: Yeah, that's tough.

J: Mmm.

G: And with 6 children, there's like, oh, that's a lot.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: So what have you found works?

J: I guess they need to know the expectations ahead of time and they need to see the reward that they're going to get for it; it has to tie into what they want, you know what I mean?

G: Mm-hmm, yes. Now, that's the key thing is, "What do you want?" Yeah.

J: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

G: Yeah.

J: Yep, that's all that works; no internal. (Laughs)

G: Right. One way, kind of like a different way to frame it is, one for rebels is they want to live up to their identity. So they want to be a responsible parent or like they want to be an athlete. You know, so they're going to do things because they're like, "I'm an athlete. What doesn't an athlete do? An athlete does drills." Or its information consequences choice; you sort of give them the information they need, you tell them the consequences of whether they do it or don't do it, and then you just let them decide. And it's sort of like, "Well, you know, if you get a certain GPA, then you get to go on that cool trip to Washington, DC with your class. And, you know, ask around because I've heard this is like a real... it's like a highlight of the year, it's super fun to go But of course, you have to have a GPA of a certain level or you can't go."

J: Right.

G: And it's just like, okay that's up to you. Like you can go on the cool trip if you want or you can get bad grades.

J: Yeah.

G: That's just like, only you can decide that, you know, and it's just like it's a... you know, and I'm not going to... because a lot of times with a the rebel, the more you remind them or nag them or even try to be helpful, the more you ignite the spirit of resistance, and then they don't want to do something because they don't want you to be the boss of them, even maybe if they would otherwise have done it or at least thought about doing it.



J: (Laughs).

G: Yeah, so...

J: I'm laughing because you're describing my oldest.

G: Mmm!

J: Ugh! Yeah, wow, that's tricky. I mean, you have to essentially allow them to fail when they don't want...

G: Yes, you do.

J: ... reminding, nagging and helping.

G: And then... and that's so important. And I've heard from so many adult rebels who are like, "The key thing is to allow rebels to experience negative consequences of their actions; like that... that is the only thing that will work like." Like somebody's like, "I pay my bills because I've had my utilities cut off. I pay my taxes on time because I know what happens when you don't." It's like, if a person around a rebel is rescuing or solving problems or kind of rushing in, then they're never going to do anything different because that works perfectly fine. And this is true for adults too.

J: (Laughs)

G: If you're married to a rebel or you're working with a rebel, if at the last minute you swoop in, it's like, "Oh my gosh, I see that you didn't get your report written on time, like I'll put aside my work and help you..."

J: Mm-hmm.

G: "... for this... like this crazy day so you can get it in on time," it's like, "Okay, well, let's do that next time too because that actually worked really well for me."

J: (Laughs). Yes.

G: It's like... yeah, you've got to just be like, "Oh, that's too bad, you ran out of time; that's a bummer. Yeah, I guess that might affect your annual review, right, because it is..."

J: (Laughs).

G: "Yeah, like, hmm, I don't know, I can't help you; you know, I got my own work to do," or just like, you know, "man..." but it's very painful, especially with children, to allow those negative consequences to fall; it can be really, really, really painful to see.

J: Wow. Well, so dream of or feel jealous of upholder-obligor families (Laughs). but do they have their own unique struggles and what would those be? Maybe I'm, you know, looking at the grass on the other... the grass is greener over there, you know?

G: There is always greener. Well, one of the things if you get upholders together or even if you have one upholder, one thing that you can get is inflexibility.

J: Ah.

G: And this is something that many people often remark on. And upholders... now, upholders themselves, I will say, rarely see themselves as being inflexible or rigid. They think the problem is with the world who cannot stick to a schedule or get their things done on their to-do list. But it can feel like there's not flexibility or there's not room for things to change or be spontaneous, and it can lead to a lot of anxiety because upholders want to meet expectations. So for instance, my daughter, she walks to school, now she walks for herself, but for years, I walked with her; walked her to school. And she always wanted to leave by a certain time to get to school which already had a huge margin because she liked to have time to like set up her stuff and like be... you know, like settle in. So she was nowhere near the time where she would have been late. But if we were late leaving, even though there was all this margin, she would get very, very anxious because she's like, "We gotta go! We gotta go! We gotta go!"

J: Mm-hmm.

G: And, you know, me, as an adult, I'm like, "Look, we can be 3 minutes off schedule and it's not a big deal," but to her, she's... or like, "The teacher says I have to read a half an hour a night." It's like, "Okay, but tonight was this... but we were with your grandparents, it went long, you're in second grade, you don't need to read a half..."

J: (Laughs)


G: "It's like not written in stone," but to her, it's like, "It is what the teacher expects." And now... and so I think one of the things that helps with understanding the four tendencies is, you understand how to communicate with somebody in the language that they understand. So instead of saying like to... an obligor might say something like, you know, "Well, you deserve to take a night off."

J: Mm-hmm.

G: "You've been working so hard, you deserve to take a night off." A rebel might say, "Well, the teachers not the boss of you, she can't tell you what to do."

J: (Laughs)

G: A questioner might be like, "What's the point of reading it? Like that's just an arbitrary time, reading 30 minutes every night; like, I don't even understand like where she came up with that. Like you



definitely like don't have to do that." But I know, as an upholder, I have to appeal to her values of inner expectation. And I would say something like, "Well, if you stay up late to do that reading, you're going to be really tired in school tomorrow. And what the teacher really wants is for you to be able to be alert and listening and focus at school. And so she will understand that sometimes things come up, you had a family situation that you had no control over, and I said that it was important for you to go to sleep so that you would be alert for school. And that's what's more important here and so that's what you're going to do so that you can be ready for school tomorrow. And you can tell her that I said that that was what was more important and you can see if she agrees." And so then I'm like speaking to like, "I see that you need to meet these expectations, I'm telling you what the expectation is that trumps here, I'm telling you why you're actually meeting your teachers bigger expectation," which my daughter would understand. It's more important to be listening at school than it is to like be doing... you know, if you do it, she got... you know, but so it's like you want to speak to them in the language that they respond to, whereas if you had a rebel kid, you would want to speak in a very different way or questioner child, you know, so yeah.

J: That's great, I love this. I'm going to restudy the four tendencies.

[Laughter]

J: Give myself some phrases on a no card to repeat.

G: Yeah, and rebels can do whatever they want; that's the thing. It's like they can be super successful; they can do anything they want to do, but you've just got to stay out of their way, kind of.

J: That's so funny. I suspect my husband's whole family are rebels because they've all been super independent and they've done big things like physicists, neuroscientists, computer programmers, my husband's a geneticist. But no one could control them, you know, they fight it tooth and nail; I see it with their mom. (Laughs)

G: Mmm!

J: So interesting. Yeah. Well, if they wanted to dive into some of your work, what would you recommend they do or read first?

G: Right. Well, you can always find out more on my website, gretchenrubin.com. You can read about any of my books and there's all kinds of resources like discussion guides and nutshell guides and all sorts of stuff there at gretchenrubin.com. And you can listen to my podcast, which we were talking about, called Happier with Gretchen Rubin, where we talk about these things. And if you're particularly interested in the four tendencies, I have a whole book about the four tendencies and you can take the quiz, again, at happiercast.com/quiz, and it is free and it's quick. And then I'm all over social media; I love to engage with people under the name Gretchen Rubin on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn. So wherever people... wherever folks want to get in touch, I'm all over the place.

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>

J: Awesome. And are you working on any new books?

G: Well, I have a little book that... a book that I wrote sort of as a lark that's coming out in the spring called 'Outer Order, Inner Calm'. Because one of the things that I've written about a lot is how outer order contributes to inner calm for most people; kind of more than it should.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: You're like, "Why does cleaning out my coat closet make me feel like I can switch careers?"

J: (Laughs)

G: And so but over and over... like people just seem so fired up about the subject; and so am I. And so I just sort of accidentally ended up writing this little book sort of in my free time. But then I was like, "Heck! This is like a real book now." It's not a big book, but it's like lots of ideas that you can go through very quickly to kind of get yourself psyched up to clear clutter. I find that reading about clearing clutter gets me very fired up. Like, I often will read a book, get myself to do like a big spring cleaning. So that book is coming out in March called 'Outer Order, Inner Calm', so that will be really fun to do.

J: March in 2019?

G: March in 2019, yeah.

J: Okay, we'll watch for it.

G: 'The Happiness Project', the 10th anniversary is coming up.

J: Oh!

G: So I'm going to re-release 'The Happiness Project' with like a bunch of new material at the back to sort of celebrate the 10th anniversary. So if you've never read 'The Happiness Project' or if you would like to give it as a gift or whatever, there's going to be this new edition that's coming out in the fall for... about 'The Happiness Project'. It's hard to believe it's been 10 years; gosh!

J: Yeah! I remember when I first read.

G: Mmm!

J: I can't believe it's been 10 years either. (Laughs)


G: I know, right? Oh!

J: Well, I'm going to remind our listeners, we'll have links to all of these books and your website and

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



the quiz on our show notes page at jenriday.com/116. And we have a couple final questions. First, what does it mean for you, Gretchen, to be a vibrant happy woman?

G: You know, I think it's when my life is a reflection of my interest, my values, my temperament. That's when I feel happy, that's when I feel vibrant, that's when I feel energetic, when I feel like I can take on big new projects.

J: Hmm, great! How do you get into that space or how do you know when you're out of that space of balancing interests, values, and temperament in the right way.

G: Mmm! I know that I'm out of it when I just start feeling out of sorts; when I feel like pulled in too many directions. Like usually if like... I'm like, "Okay, I need to spend a day like in the library doing research," like that always brings me back to myself and kind of restores my energy. So, yeah, it's and I feel like I'm doing too much stuff that I don't really want to do.

J: Yeah, right.

G: When everything feels like a slough, I'm like, you know, "This is not... whatever I'm doing is not working, I need to figure this out."

J: There you go. And let's have a challenge from you to our listeners and then we'll say goodbye.

G: I would challenge your listeners to get enough sleep because I feel like it's so simple, but when you have a good night's sleep, you have more energy, and when you have more energy, you're just more able to do all the things that make you happier; whether it's exercise or call your friend or plan a party or go for a walk in nature or meditate or play the piano or read. Whatever it is, I feel like when you're feeling drained and overwhelmed, then it feels like it's too much trouble to do anything except like scroll through their social media feed...

J: (Laughs). Yes.

G: ... or like read a magazine that you've already read, you know, or like, you know, watch some TV show because you can't even like be bothered to change the channel or like, you know, do something else. So I feel like getting enough sleep is really at the core of a lot of things that end up being super important to happiness.

J: How much sleep do you need to feel your best?

G: I need at least 7 and a half hours of sleep. And then if I'm under stress or if I have something that's very demanding, I will need like up to 8, 8 and a half, and I will definitely if I try to stay very attuned to that. I always wake up at 6 AM, always, always, always, but I will go to bed earlier if I feel like, "Okay, I need..." I feel ready for sleep earlier and I think I need to sleep, I will go to bed earlier to try to get more sleep when I need it. And I guard it jealously; in fact, my sister calls me a sleep zealot. Because she's

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>



not so good about getting her sleep; she likes to stay up.

J: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

G: And she... that's like for her to goof around time, it's like the only time she has to herself so she'll stay up just to enjoy it.

J: Uh-huh.

G: And I'm always like, "It's just not worth it! The next day, you'd feel so much better if you got enough sleep!"

J: Oh.

G: So we have this ongoing conversation...

J: Yeah.

G: ... all the time.

J: You make upholderiness sound amazing; being an upholder sounds so good.

G: Ah!

[Laughter]

J: Well, then, just wow us with your morning routine. What do you do when the alarm rings and it's 6 AM? I bet it's amazing.


G: No, I mean, I just get up, you know, I stretch not... just because it helps me wake up, not because I really think there's a lot of like inherent value, but it just makes my body feel more awake. Then I take my dog, Barnaby, for a walk; because, yes, we have a dog, and I am the one walking him at 6:00.

J: (Laughs)

G: So I take him out for a walk. Then I got myself my first cup of coffee, and then I'll go upstairs and do like check my email. And a lot of people say, "You shouldn't do email first thing in the morning," but I feel like I can't settle down to any kind of work until I've sort of figured out.. like done all these little things and seen where I am.

J: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

G: And so I'll do that until it's time to get up with my daughter and kind of like... now she's 13, so she



gets up and gets dressed and takes a shower and everything. But I'll come down and either make her breakfast or if she's already started making herself breakfast, I'll just hang out with her until she leaves for school. Then I go for a walk. But this has been my new thing is to go for a walk in Central Park every morning...

J: Mmm.

G: ... instead of going to the gym; just because it's been so beautiful here.

J: Mm-hmm.

G: And then I start my workday, then I come back to my desk or I go to the library where a lot of times I'll do work, and that's when I start whatever it is that I need to get done that day.

J: Well, you're amazing, and I'm so excited about the four tendencies; I know my listeners are as well. So thank you so much for all the great work you've put into the world. I can't wait to read 'Outer Order and Inner Calm' coming soon.

[Laughter]

G: Excellent, excellent! I'm glad to hear it; yes! It's been so much to talk to you. Thank you so much for having me on the show.

J: Take care, Gretchen.

Thank you so much for listening today. And if you're curious about how the Vibrant Happy Women Club might improve your life and increase your happiness, head over to vibranthappywomenclub.com to learn more. I will see you next time, and until then, take care.

Outro: Thanks for listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast at www.jenriday.com.

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Episode 116: Choose the Bigger Life with Gretchen Rubin

<http://jenriday.com/116>