

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 32:

Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby with April Boyd

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J: You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 32.

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

J: Hey there, Jen Riday here and this is Vibrant Happy Women, welcome everyone. On our last episode, I was talking with Susie Parker all about sleep deprivation that happens when our babies are born and all kinds of topics related to being a new mom or a mom of a couple of little kids. We talked about breastfeeding and getting kids to sleep and just all those good things that new moms I think about. So if you haven't listened to that episode already, be sure to go back and do so. On today's episode, I'm talking with April Boyd and she shares her story of surviving the loss of her 1 day old baby girl. It's a heartbreaking story, but it's so touching to hear how April went to the depths of deep, deep darkness and chose to claw her way out. As women, and really as people on this earth, we all face times when we are totally struggling and suffering, and some of these most difficult times can be around the death of someone we love. Be sure to listen to this episode if you want to find out some strategies for coping with. You'll love how April shares how she was able to turn her daughter's death from a tragedy into a way to celebrate her daughter's life as a legacy. April's going forward and doing all the good she can in the name of her daughter and this is a touching episode, I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Hey there, welcome to Vibrant Happy Women, I am Jen Riday, and today, I'll be talking with April Boyd. April is a private practice therapist with clients across the globe, creator of the Baby Loss Survival Guide and the founder of the Love & Loss Project, an online comfort and inspiration station for a woman who have experienced the loss of a baby or pregnancy. When April's not doing the work she loves to do, you might find her on the top of a paddleboard or the side of the mountain with her boyfriend and her 6 pound Yorkie, Sasha. Welcome, April!


A: Hello, Jen, thanks for having me in.

J: Yeah, I'm so glad to have you. Yeah, this will be so fun. So we love to start out with our guests' favorite quote, which one would you like to share with us today?

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>



A: Okay, so I have many favorite quotes, but one of my absolute favorites is that, "We are here for a good time, not a long time," which I believe is actually song lyrics by a Trooper. And the reason why this is one of my favorite lines is, I think that there is something so powerful in this, not in a reckless teenage sense of the words, but in the taking full responsibility for our own happiness and our own journey sense of the word. And I think so often, we get caught up in so many things that pull us so many different directions that we really forget that ultimately, our time is in fact limited and what we do with it matters greatly.

J: Uh-huh, yeah, that's so true, and so living for a good time and not just a long time; that's a good way to look at it, thanks for that.

A: Mm-hmm.

J: Well, April, in the introduction, I mentioned that you are the creator of Baby Loss Survival Guide and I have a suspicion that would be related to your low point, is that correct?

A: That's absolutely correct. I'll sure just share with you a little bit of my story if that's okay. So I have worked in the field in the social work therapists and I worked in this field for about a decade and I've been helping people through all kinds of trauma and tragedy and change when I went through an experience in my own personal life that took me out at the knees. I had a little girl named Nora and Nora passed away suddenly and unexpectedly when she was 1 day old. And so everything that I thought I really understood about my world and myself and everything I kind of believed to be true and certain really smashed into about a million pieces at that time. So that was definitely my low point, for sure.

J: So tell us more about the actual experience, if it's not too painful, what happened and paint that picture for us.

A: Sure. So I had a healthy pregnancy and there was no risk factors, there was no known concerns and she was 8 hours old when she just stopped breathing in my arms. And so it was one of those things that no one could and no one has really been able to explain, unfortunately, it is just kind of like being hit by lightning where you were suddenly one of those a very strange and the real statistics. And so I remember somebody at that time, you know, saying to me, you know, "You might have an easier time getting through this because this is the work that you do," and I remember being both really aware of the good intentions behind that, but also really feeling like that was absolutely ludicrous, right? (Laughs)


J: Right, right.

A: I truly did in no way feel that I have been trained to deal with the death of my own child. And, you know, it was interesting because in hindsight looking back on that, I realized that there was actually in fact a few features of truth in that because my work had really taught me a number of very important things that proved really useful to me. And one of those was that I was very acutely aware that these are the moments in our lives that change who we are. I was very aware that this was really the crossroads of, ultimately, I was going to be changed. And so there was the risk that I was going to become someone who was bitter and angry and lived the rest of my life like a victim or I was going to somehow find

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>



a way to allow myself to expand and to come out the other side of this somehow feeling like a better, stronger version of myself.

J: Mm-hmm. So how did you come out of that expanding? I assumed that's what happened because you sound strong and you're telling your story, so how do you expand after the death of a child?

A: So I think it's always a work of progress, for one, and whenever we go through hard things, whatever those hard things are... and I think that's part of the universal experience of just life, right? We are ultimately always a bit of work in progress. But I think, for me, the most important thing that I can say and then I can really offer anyone else listening to this is that, the first thing is really making the decision. So at that time, I didn't yet know how exactly I was going to get myself out of this darkness, but I absolutely knew that I needed to. And it really is that decision of committing to the goal of figuring it out. And, for me, that decision was really, really critically important for a couple of reasons. One, I knew that if I allowed myself to kind of just go with the flow and kind of just alone one day to turn into the next, I had worked with enough, you know, smart, powerful, successful people who had kind of been in many ways lost through whatever challenge it was that they have gone through to know that I was not ranked to this risk, that this could really wash me up to sea completely.

J: Mm-hmm.

A: And I knew that I was going to have to fight and I knew that I was going to have to make a decision.

J: Mm-hmm.

A: And if I didn't do that, what I was very much afraid of was that, if I continued to just self-destruct, right, and crumble and be lost, that the story that would go on to be told about my daughter in my circle of friends and family would ultimately be some version that she was the reason why her mother was now a complete mess.

J: Oh.

A: And I did not want to allow that to become her legacy. And so I really committed to the idea that I was going to force myself back to life, I was going to force myself to get back to a state of being able to experience things like joy again because that is how I needed to honor her and to make sure that the tragedy of her story really became a love story.


J: Mm-hmm. So how did you turn that love story into Love & Loss Project?

A: So that started really organically for me. So ultimately, one of my guiding goals was I really wanted to... I had experienced, you know, such a deep and a beautiful love and the magic of having her in my life, even though that was very brief, and I wanted to make that mean something and I wanted to have that offer something good. And so I started doing various things like fundraising projects from eternity homes and various stuff just because I really felt compelled to honor her in some of those ways, and in

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>



many ways, that was consistent in how I lived my life, you know, as a social worker anyways; so that was a natural avenue for me. But I realized that I needed to make that more formalized and... and really fill some of the gaps that I encountered in this system because this is understandably not a topic that we wanted to talk about a whole lot. So even though miscarriage and baby loss affects 1 in 4 women, this is still very much a taboo topic in our society. And I understand that I am compassionate for that, but I also knew that that meant that there was a bit of a vacuum and there was a bit of a gap. And because of my own experience of having a hard time accessing the stuff I was craving and looking for, I knew that I needed to create that to make it available for other people. So I created the Love & Loss Project where I really just wanted to make as much free resources and tools and strategies available to help other women going through this and to really start to break some of the silence around the issue of baby loss. And so that's what I started to do and then I went on to create The Baby Loss Survival Guide, which is a program that basically helps women any time of day or night, they're able to access that online support to really work through a number of sessions to help them get what they need to come out of this experience also feeling like stronger versions of themselves.

J: Hmm, that's brilliant. And if they wanted to find that guide, where would they go?

A: Sure. So it is lovelossproject.com and I'm also sharing... there's a free self-care kit there too. So if anyone had either gone through this experience or you have a friend and... and we all have a friend that this is probably going to be useful to, and I can definitely share that with her from there, so it's lovelossproject.com.

J: And they can find the self-care kit and the baby lost survival guide their?

A: Correct.

J: Thank you, wonderful. So I'm sure many of our listeners are struggling with the loss of maybe a child, maybe a baby or even something else or someone else, what advice would you have for them?

A: First know that you are going to get through this and this is going to change you in some ways, but we still have control over which direction this is going to take us. And I think one of the things that... most valuable things that I did, one of the other quotes I really love is that, "That which will resist get stronger." And I think so often, we have the tendency to just want to outrun the pain and outrun what hurts and distract ourselves and stay busy and avoid it, but I believe in many ways that, even though that's useful at times, if that's our main go-to strategy all the time, then what we're really doing is just prolonging the agony. And so that which we resists get does get stronger. So instead, I think we really need to give ourselves permission to open ourselves to this, to give ourselves own selves the care and comfort that we deserve and to make our own healing a priority. And that's not easy to do because I think, especially as women, we really want to keep everything moving, you know, at that same level of functioning that we had before.


J: Mm-hmm.



Vibrant Happy
Women

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>



A: And it can be really so difficult to see, "You know what? I'm going to have to let this drop," or, "I'm going to have to put this on hold," or, "I am just going to need to shift this into a bit of a lower gear because this is truly not going to benefit me or anyone else in the long run to just push through this no matter what."

J: Mm-hmm, so taking the time to be in touch with feelings and to truly feel, instead of run from it.

A: Absolutely, yeah, to give yourself that gift of your own presence.

J: Mm, I love that, thank you so much, April. So, again, if you want to learn more, you can go to love-lossproject.com. So, April, shifting forward, tell us a little more about what a vibrant happy life looks for you today.

A: Mm, so kind of going back to the quote I shared earlier, right, about, "Here for a good time," what that really means to me is trying to live as deliberately and as consciously as possible. So one of the beautiful things that I believe I have learned from my experience is not to take things for granted and it's to have this awareness of my own mortality in a sense, that we often just kind of go through the motions of all day as if we have an unlimited supply of them. And I've become really aware of the fact that that's just not the case. And while in some ways that can feel a bit terrifying, it's actually incredibly powerful because what that allows us to do is really live life based on our priorities, to really make deliberate, purposeful commitment to the things that really matter most to us, and to really live a life that is in alignment with who we are and what we want to leave behind us.

J: Mm, that's great, that's beautiful. And what is one thing that's really exciting you about life right now?

A: Hmm, I always say I'm excited about everything, truly. So I... that's kind of the other piece of this is that I am aware that, while I have no control over the fact that my daughter's heart stopped beating and mine continued, I feel like I've had to embrace the fact that I am in fact still alive, and I don't want to waste that; so I'm excited. Right now, I'm in Canada and the seasons are changing and the leaves are turning these incredible shades of red and gold and it's stunning, so I'm excited to go out and do some hiking this weekend and get out and get some fresh air. I'm excited about... I'm always very excited about the work that I'm creating with my Love & Lost Project and that the Baby Loss Survival Guide is finally completed because that was such a long process for me because I really wanted it to absolutely fit the vision that I had in my mind of what it was that I... I wanted to offer and make available. And so just really feeling very blessed to be able to be doing that work and to get it out there into the world and have conversations like these, so thank you for that.


J: Yeah, thank you. Well, so your life sounds amazing and you expanded through that really hard struggle, but I am curious, are there any other things that you are struggling with today and still expanding through?

A: Oh, absolutely. So like I mentioned that I truly believe that our lives are always a work in progress. And I always want to be evolving, you know, even when I'm 60 and 70, I still want to be evolving and

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>



growing. And that means kind of making room for parts we don't like as much or the parts that are not as shiny and pretty and picture-perfect.

J: Mm hmm.

A: And so, for me, one of the things that I really realized is that grief functions as such a magnifying glass and it really just illuminates and brings to the surface, you know, some of our long-standing patterns, right, and some of the long-standing things that get into our way. And the, for me, that was coming to notice and become more aware of some of my long-standing patterns of perfecting and performing and peacekeeping. And I'd like to say that that was the result of, you know, blinding white light and, you know, insight but in reality, it was kind of more of an outcome being exhausted and not being able to function and maintain the previous levels that I had operated at for many different people in my life. And so I'm still, you know, working on those issues where it shows up with perfectionism. Elizabeth Gilbert has this quote I had just loved and she says, "Perfectionism is just fear in really good shoes."

J: Yeah.

A: And I love that, I love that so much. And for sure, that shows up for me, right? Right now, I am wearing lipstick for an interview that I knew was going to be audio-only. These habits die hard, right; all these things that we do to just operate in those ways that we are used to and comfortable with so, for, that's always a work in progress.

J: That's great, "Fear is..." say that again, that quote?

A: "Perfectionism is just a fear in a really good shoes."

J: Oh, really good shoes, I love that. Well, let's talk about a few of your favorite things, April. What is... it sounds like you have some amazing habits and ideas about living a really expensive life, but what is the favorite personal habit that contributes to your success?

A: Hmm, for sure, working out. So I say that hesitantly because when I used to hear people say that kind of thing, it would really annoy me in a way and I kind of want to roll my eyes because who has time for that? But I have really come to know that stress and trauma and whatever hard thing it is that we go through, even on that day-to-day stress basis, it is a physical experience and it needs to be treated as such. And so there's really good reasons for that evolution-wise, right, just in terms of how the brain is hardwired to, but we need to burn off that tension and that stress. And so even though I had always been active, that really became an absolute survival strategy for me when I was going through the harder times and the darker times. And I maintained that today because what I found is, that 1 hour that I work out, probably saves me several hours in the day in terms of my productivity, my mood, I am just able to move through my day in a more positive, clear headspace. And so that's definitely worth curving out that hour of time for me.

J: Mm, that's great advice that I and many others should... would do well to follow, I love that. I also have

Vibrant Happy Women

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>

noticed that but, you know, sometimes with my 6 kids, I like to have an excuse, so you've motivated me, thank you. (Laughs)

A: Yeah, but it's hard to do, right? Because part of that really does mean putting our own selves of the top of our to-do list and that is so hard to do.

J: Mm-hmm.

A: That is so hard to do. But I think of it truly as that air mask philosophy, right? You know, when you get on that plane and the flight attendant says, "Take your own air first before you put on the masks of anyone beside you," this works the exact same way, we have to get our own breath first.

J: Hmm, that's right, that's right. And what's a favorite easy meal that you like to eat regularly?

A: Mm, so one of my favorite things, I had discovered this recipes recipe for steamed the kale and carrots and you mix it with this almond based dressing that's really easy to do in just kind of your little blender and that is super quick and super easy and nourishing and the delicious, so that's definitely one of my favorites.

J: Yum, that sounds great. And what's your current favorite kitchen gadget?

A: Hmm, I have to say my favorite kitchen gadget is my spiralizer. For those of you who are not familiar with spiralizers, they are fantastic, they basically take zucchini or sweet potatoes or carrots and spiralize it so that you almost have like a pasta noodle like a spaghetti pasta noodle out of that.

J: Mm-hmm.

A: So I love that. But if I'm being really honest, I would have to say that my other favorite kitchen tool is my cell phone for ordering takeout

[Laughter]

J: Nice, perfect.

A: Because I love good food and I love to eat healthy. And sometimes, there's just not the time to really make that a priority in the day, and so that's one of the things that I give permission to do just to make my life a little bit easier sometimes.

J: I have never heard that but, I love it.

A: (Laughs)

J: Cellphone as a favorite kitchen gadget.

Vibrant Happy Women

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>



A: Absolutely

J: Wonderful, wonderful. And name a favorite book that you'd recommend to our listeners.

A: Danielle LaPorte 'The Desire Map'. If you have not got this book, you need to. This book is about getting really clear on how you want to create your goals from the inside out. And so what Danielle basically says is that we have goal setting upside-down. We say these things like, "I want to lose 5 pounds," or, "I want to make X number of dollars," or, "I want to go on this trip," because ultimately, why we want those things is because we think that we are going to feel a certain way when we get that. And so instead, why not just start with how you want to feel? And it might be that you end up taking that trip, but it might be that you end up just doing other things in your daily life that give you that feeling that you're looking for right now.

J: (Laughs). I am laughing because I... I just kind of learned the same thing recently. I realized going on trips with all our kids doesn't give me what I wanted to feel.

[Laughter]

A: Right.

J: So I am creating more of this staycation effect and it's a much better feeling for me at least, and I think even for them, so that's great. 'The Desire Map', yeah.

A: Which I think is brilliant because, again, it's allowing yourself to kind of break out of that standard picture of what we think good times are supposed to look like...

J: Right, right.

A: ... and really challenging that.

J: It's... you're so right. Every parent believes they must take a trip to Disneyworld, for example, and I think we're getting past. Our oldest is 15 and we're going to have more of a Wisconsin fun I think. (Laughs)

A: Yes, yes. And allowing ourselves to do what truly feels good.

J: Right.

A: Yeah.


J: Right. And what's the best advice you've ever received, April?

A: Mm, I think I was fairly fortunate in that, when I was younger, I remember being a teenager and my sister saying to me, "Your body is your compass, you need to tune into what your gut is telling you and

*Vibrant Happy
Women*

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>



that is your guide," and that is always, I have found to be just so true for me. I think some people experience that a little bit differently, but I think that there's some universal truth to, "Your body is your compass, it knows your truth, it knows what feels good to you, it knows your answers." It is our heads that complicates things and then work through these pro and con lists and that can kind of just, you know, Rubik's cube our way through whatever issue or challenge it is that we are working on. But if you kind of just redirect your focus, your body knows and it's going to tell you, right, "Does it feel tight or does it feel expansive?" It gives you that instant feedback information.

J: Hmm, "Your body is your compass." You are full of good quotes to the, I'm loving this. (Laughs)

A: Perfect.

J: So I'll remind our listeners that they can find links to everything April's been talking about by going to jenriday.com/32. And now, April, we've reached my favorite part of the show, it's the happiness formula. So if you had to create a 3 to 5 part formula of actions or ideas that maximize your happiness, what would that include?

A: Sure. I think my first one would be, "Be as compassionate as possible to both yourself and to others, because at the end of the day, we're all just doing our best and that's going to look really different one day to the next." And we really have no idea what someone else is really going through behind closed doors. And so I think if we just kind of allow ourselves to approach life with just a bit more compassion, that can save us a lot of frustration and anger and drama. The other thing I would say is, "Be the guardian of your own health and happiness. Focus on the pieces that you can control and bring your attention to that." I think so often, we really confuse things like mind-reading with love, right?

J: Yeah.

A: That, "If someone really loved me and if they really cared about me, they would know what I want or they would know why I'm upset well they would know what I need," but in reality, that's actually our job to let other people know that.

J: Mm-hmm.

A: And that's an act of love in doing so. So, "Be the guardian of your own happiness."

J: Hmm.

A: And my last one is, "Choose joy." I don't think that happiness is just an accident, I think that it is a choice.

J: Mm-hmm.

A: So choose joy.

Vibrant Happy Women

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>



J: Choose joy; #choose joy as my friend, Stacy Mayer, said in a previous episode.

A: Oh, wow.

J: I love that, I love that. Well, April, thank you so much for sharing your story, and before we say goodbye, give of the Vibrant Happy Women community a parting challenge.

A: Oh, I love this idea. So my challenge for you, everyone out there, is to think about the one thing that you have been avoiding. What is that thing that you've been procrastinating on that you know is calling your name? Whether that's a class that you want to take, whether that's a change that you want to make in your workday, whether that's a conversation that you have been putting off having, but you know that you need to express and get out there with somebody that you care about. Do that thing that you've been putting off doing and get it done now.

J: Oh, I love that. Thank you so much, April, for being on the show. And, again, our listeners can find links to everything you've been talking about at jenriday.com/32. Appreciate you being here, April.

A: Well, thank you so much for having me, this really means a lot to me to be able to have these conversations and to be able to continue to share my daughter's story and light with the world, so thank you so much for letting me do that here.

J: Thank you, April, take care.

A: Take care.

J: Thanks so much for joining April and me and you can find more about April and her message at lovelossproject.com. If you know any woman who has struggled with the loss of a child or an infant, then send them there because April has really been through it and can really help. Be sure to join me next time when I talk with Angela Roberts about how she discovered her true purpose; that thing she was born to do. So often, we get this nagging feeling that there's something more we do we should be doing with our lives, yet we don't know what it is or how we can go about finding out what it is. So be sure to join me as I talk with Angela and she shares her tips about what she did to figure out her true purpose. And until then, make it a great week. Take care.

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



Vibrant Happy
Women

Episode 32: Moving Forward After the Loss of A Baby
with April Boyd

<http://jenriday.com/32>