

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Episode 49:

I Have Cancer but Cancer Doesn't Have Me  
with Sophie Sabbage

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J: You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 49.

S: One of my doctors said to me very early on when I was in deep shock, he took me by the hand and he said, "Don't become a patient, Mrs. Sabbage, live your life." You know, it literally struck me in the chest and I went, "Okay, don't become a patient," and I didn't.

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 to Vibrant Happy Women. I'm Dr. Jen Riday and I am so glad you're here. Have you joined the Get Happier Challenge yet? It's still happening right now and you can still sign up by going to [jenriday.com/happy](http://jenriday.com/happy). In fact, it's been so popular and those in the challenge are really loving it so much that I've decided to make it permanently available through email; so you'll get all the emails for the challenge one by one anytime you sign up, even if it's 6 months after the fact. So you can do that by going to [jenriday.com/happy](http://jenriday.com/happy). On our last episode, I spoke with Kimberly Johnson all about reawakening sex and physical intimacy. She shared some amazing tips about guilt and shame and learning to love our bodies and to listen and communicate with her partner. So if you haven't listened to that already, you'll want to do that.

Today, I'll be talking with Sophie Sabbage. Sophie is the author of 'The Cancer Whisperer' and she also has a terminal cancer diagnosis. She talks about her experience of getting that diagnosis and feeling terrified, yet she has chosen to allow this cancer experience to transform her, to be empowering, to make her life good; she has chosen to be a thriver and not just a survivor. And I love that quote which I used in the title, she said, "I have cancer, but cancer doesn't have me," so empowering. So if you or anyone you know has struggled with cancer or really any devastating illness or situation or hardship, this episode will really help because we all struggle at times and we can let the struggle define us or we can allow the struggle to transform us. So let's go ahead and dive in and listen to Sophie's amazing words of wisdom.

Today, I'm talking with Sophie Sabbage and she's an inspirational writer, speaker, and facilitator who has worked in the field of human development, emotional intelligence, mindset change, and corporate culture change for more than 20 years. Her book, 'The Cancer Whisperer', was a UK bestseller and will be available in the US on January 24th. Welcome to Vibrant Happy Women, Sophie.

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S: Thank you for having me.

J: Yeah, I'm so glad you're here. I... I've been on your website and looked at what you're about and I think it's really amazing. So before we dive into all of that, why don't you share your favorite quote with us?

S: Okay, I think my favorite quote of all time... I have a motto and a quote, but I think my favorite quote of all time is Viktor Frankl...

J: Mm-hmm.

S: ... who, he survived Auschwitz and he said, "The last of the human freedoms is to choose your own attitude in any given situation."

J: Ah.

S: And that's been a guide for me for many, many years.

J: Okay, so let's go to your motto and then I want you to come back and tell us how these have helped you in your life.

S: Sure. My motto is one I came up with myself when I was diagnosed with cancer and it was a real turning point for me, and it's just simply, "I have cancer, cancer does not have me."

J: Hmm, okay. So tell us about your low point because we know where this is going and I can't wait to hear how you've been able to, you know, choose your attitude in that horrible situation.

S: Sure. Well, I was diagnosed with... I mean, I was blindsided when this happened. I was 48 years old and I was diagnosed with stage 4 'terminal', in inverted commas, lung cancer, in October, 2014.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: The diagnosis was devastating, but there was a particular point in time that was my lowest point of my life. It took them 6 weeks to find all the tumors in my body. I had them in my lymph nodes, my bones, my lungs, my spine.

J: Mm.

S: And we thought that was it; if that wasn't enough, we thought that was it.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: But I kept pressing for a brain scan because I just felt like something was wrong. I was... my vision in my left eye wasn't right. And I went for what I thought was a planning session for my radiotherapy for

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my... a tumor on my neck, but I went on my own; I didn't know I was getting any results that day. I would always take my husband or my best friend for scan result. And I was on my own that day and he said, "Oh, I've got your brain results," and I sat down and he told me I had multiple tumors in my brain and in the lining of my brain. And I said, "How many?" and he said, "More than we could count."

J: Whoa.

S: And that was the most devastating moment of my life by a really long way. Well, the reason it was so devastating was because I realized in that moment that I valued my lucidity and clarity of mind more than my life and it was threatening my cognitive abilities, my ability to speak, my ability to see, my ability to understand. So it was terrifying, for me, the idea that I was going to lose my mind, having worked for 30 years on gaining my right mind, if that makes sense.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: It was devastating.

J: So you received this news and you're all alone, how did you even cope with that? You make... it would make you want to crawl on the... lay on the ground in the fetal position, what do you even do with news like that?

S: Well, I wasn't allowed to drive home so my oncologist asked his secretary to bring me home. And I remember it was November and it was very dark outside and it was very dark inside and it was just dark everywhere; it was just... everything was dark. And I got home and my husband was out and I lit a fire. And I... you know, I used to think people prayed on their knees as a sign of reverence...

J: Mm-hmm.

S: ... and a bit of humility, but... so I now know that, sometimes, we're just brought to our knees by the events of our lives. And I was brought to my knees that day and I literally just dropped to my knees by the log fire at home and I prayed. I mean, I don't often pray, Jen. I've prayed maybe 3 times a really heartfelt, you know, not going to church and doing it ritualistically, but a deep heartfelt prayer. And I... I wept and I prayed and I grieved for about... I just was flooded with grief and I let it flow through me. And I remember praying saying, "I can do this cancer journey if I have my mind," you know, "And if you're going to take my mind, then take me," was pretty much the essence of it. And by the time John came home, I was kind of calm...

J: Wow.

S: ... and ready to deal with it. And I think that was a combination of just surrendering to my utter loss of control and letting the grief just flood through.

J: So I'm curious, you know, maybe there's a juxtaposition, how did your... how did John react?

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S: He was gutted.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: He was gutted and, I mean, I remember he... he just held me that night and the 3 of us (we have a daughter) we just... she was asleep, but we just curled up in bed that night and we thought it was game over.

J: Mm.

S: I was offered whole brain radiation; that was the only thing I was offered. And I've been told that many people who have that are not the same person afterwards because they radiate the brain indiscriminantly. And I wasn't up for that and I was in this bind of, "I'm going to lose my mind one way or the other."

J: Mm-hmm.

S: "I have the treatment or don't have the treatment." We thought it was game over and we saw no way out at that point.

J: Wow. So you woke up the next day and what did you do to move forward?

S: Well, I think the grief and the surrender really empowered me paradoxically; I never thought of surrender in that way. But I... in a way, I remember going back to my oncologist and he said, "Let's book you in for whole brain radiation." And by then, I'd had some conversations, I'd done some research and I said to him, "I'm not willing to do it yet, we need to look at other treatments first," and I refused to have the whole brain radiation, even though I didn't have another solution.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: I just was trusting my instincts very, very strongly and I knew I needed to say no, but I didn't know more than that. And I think that's when I took my power back and started directing my treatment instead of being a victim of what was happening, and we did find another way. I mean, we ended up putting me on a drug that... I mean, 6 months later, my brain was clear and I didn't have whole brain radiation.

J: Wow.

S: So I really took charge of what was going on the next day. It might have been more than... the next day might have been the next week but, you know?

J: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So you had 6 months and your brain was clear, what happened with all the other tumors?

S: They all went as well, except my primary. So my primary shrank about 70%, and it's still there, and

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then I was stable for about 18 months. My brain tumor did come back again, but I was much calmer about them the second time.

J: Hmm, so where do you stand today with... with your cancer today?

S: I still have cancer and it still doesn't have me. I still have one primary tumor in my lung that's very small and it's been stable for a while. I did have multiple brain tumors again last year so that's my weak spot, but they've all gone again. So right now, I'm stable and counting my blessings and my treatment options are not exhausted. So I think they gave me less than a year and I'm... it's 2 and a half years now. So...

J: I'm sure there are people out there who are wondering, "What was that amazing drug that did so much for your brain?"

S: Well, I did a number of things. Firstly, I have a particular mutation, and if you have this mutation, you qualify for this particular drug. A lot of cancer patients have mutations and they have these targeted drugs now; this one's called Afatinib.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: Though it normally only has a 9 months shelf life, I've been on it for a lot longer; I've been on it over 2 years. And I also did... I've had radiotherapy and I've done a lot of complementary treatments as well to enhance its efficacy. So I've really done an integrated treatment plan.

J: Hmm, and so now, what I saw in your website, you're helping others with cancer, can you tell us more about that?

S: Sure. I started out writing a blog, partly to keep my friends and family up-to-date because I couldn't keep up with all their emails, and partly because I noticed (and this may be very British) in the hospital waiting rooms and oncologists units, that everyone was kind of numbed out and no one was talking, and I could feel the fear stalking the corridors of the hospitals and hanging like a fog over the patients. And no one was crying or trembling or... except I was crying and I was the only one and I was like an anomaly, and I thought, "This is weird." And I think is partly British culture, you know, we're very stiff upper lip and 'tough it out' and 'be positive all the time', and I didn't want to do that; I... I wasn't positive and my upper lip was not stiff, it was quivering.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: I wanted to just say, "It's okay to be vulnerable and it's okay to be terrified," and also to teach people what to do with their terror; which I had learned a lot about over the last 25 years, that's what I do professionally, so... and it saved my life to be able to work through my own terror. And I think fear makes... if you don't take hold of your fear and pass through it, it will make your decisions for you as a cancer patient. And I see so many patients around me and friends now letting their fear on the show really.

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J: Hmm.

S: But I wanted... eventually, I wrote 'The Cancer Whisperer' because I wanted to help people navigate the emotional challenges that come with this disease, whether it's fear or grief or denial; that happens to be my background, and it was the book I couldn't find.

J: So did you write that while you were going through chemo?

S: I'm on chemo all the time so yes.

J: Mm-hmm, okay, yes. (Laughs)

S: Yes to that, and I also passed some kidney stones while I was writing the book.

J: Oh no!

S: It was the most painful experience of my life. I wrote in 6 weeks; it wanted to write itself.

J: Mm.

S: And it's partly my memoir and partly a practical self-help book for people receiving this diagnosis.

J: So it's called 'The Cancer Whisperer'. And if you had to narrow it down to a kind of an overview of, you know, what someone might learn from reading it, could you share that with us?

S: Well, there's a compass in that I called the cancer compass because it is about navigating your way through it. And partly it's about how to..., "How do you deal with the fear and the rage and the grief and so that your fears not running the show?" that's one part. Secondly, it's about, "How do you take charge of your treatment in a system that tends to..." the moment you get a diagnosis like this in my experience, especially in in this country, you become a patient with the disease rather than a person with disease, and you start... the medical machine swallows you up before you even know what you're doing. And it's very difficult to find your way through that and go, "Hang on, what am I going to do here? What's the right treatment for me? Is what the doctor telling me, is he telling me everything I need to know?" You need to be really in your authority to make those kinds of decisions. And it's also, I think one of my biggest reasons for writing it is this... this whole war on cancer thing going on, Richard Nixon declared 'the war on cancer' in the 60s and the metaphor stuck, and now, everyone who dies of cancer lost their 'brave battle'; that's how it's reported over here.

J: Oh.

S: And 'the fight against cancer' and 'rebel against cancer', and it puts you at war with your own body when you need to make peace with your body. I've been at war with my body my whole life, that's partly why I got cancer. And I knew I needed to make peace with my body and listen to it instead of

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going... fighting it. And I want to get rid of my disease, but I think I've got a better shot at doing that if I'm listening to it than if I'm in a state of anger and defiance and rebellion, which just causes stress. So 'The Cancer Whisperer' is about actually changing that narrative and saying, "What if cancer is just an illness and not an enemy? And what if it's teacher, not an enemy?"

J: Wow! So take us back to that... that phrase you said that you'd been at war with your body your whole life.

S: Yeah.

J: Tell us, what's the before-and-after of, you know, making peace with your body?

S: I had eating disorders from about the age of 15; I write about this in my book. So by the time I was 10 years old, I was a 5'6", double D cup, menstruating, fully developed woman.

J: Mm.

S: And I just wasn't ready for that. I got mercilessly teased and bullied. And by the time I was 15, I just... you know, I was bulimic and that went on to my mid-20s. And I... I think I did a lot of damage to my body at that time.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: And I came a long way with it. I mean, I've been working on myself in therapeutic ways for 30 years and... but I think I sowed the seeds of my disease by being quite self-destructive. I smoked in my teens, I didn't smoke for decades; I mean, I smoked for a few years. I just did stuff that was self-harming, I guess.

J: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

S: And I think cancer... I think there are multiple reasons, including environmental and genetic ones; I certainly have a genetic factor. But I need to take radical responsibility for what I did that got me here because that's the part I can change. I can't change the genetic thing, but I can say, "Well, how... what did I do to get myself here?"

J: Mm-hmm. And you said, "Maybe cancer could be a teacher." Do you feel like you love your body more now than before you had cancer? Is that possible?

S: Oh, so much more; oh, so much more. I don't love it every day. it's not... you know, it's still a climb for me sometimes. I went on steroids last summer and I got bloated and, you know, I had to find peace with it again; but, oh, so much more. I'm happier and my skin, I'm more joyous in my life. But for my child, having a child, I think the one thing I haven't come to terms with this that I may leave her while she's a child.

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J: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

S: But in every other sense, I am more grateful to my cancer than I'm scared of it. I'm grateful for it, it's transformed my life; I've let it transform my life, that... you need to be proactive to do that, but it's gifted me in many ways.

J: How old is your daughter?

S: She's nearly 7.

J: Okay. And so you've let cancer transform your life, I've never heard anyone talk about that; say that again. I just... it like moved over me, gave me chills; oh my goodness.

S: I've let cancer transform my life.

J: And you're grateful for it?

S: And I'm grateful for it because it... you know, it's brought me home to myself in ways I wasn't at home. I'm more authentic, I'm more loving, I'm more boundaried, I don't tolerate bullshit the way I used to. I've let go of false friendships, I've reconnected with friendships I lost a long time ago, I've healed broken relationships. I'm healthier than I've ever been, I mean, you know, it's a long list.

J: Wow.

S: Yeah.

J: That's beautiful. And so you... I read on your website that you've talked to other people who have cancer, can you share a few of those stories of helping them find peace with cancer?

S: I think most of them are people... my book was published in hardback in the UK a year ago and I set up a closed... I have a public Facebook page, The Cancer Whisperer, but I have a closed group as well that's much more private and for emotional support. And I now have hundreds of people in that group who we just support each other emotionally. And many of them got in touch with me to say, "Thank you for saying what I think and saying what I feel and trying to change the battle language and giving me a way to deal with my fear." Because there are some really practical tools that I teach to do that. And... and some have thanked me for being a thriver, not a survivor, which is funny. You know, people with stage-4 saying, "It's so refreshing to meet someone who hasn't had a miracle cure..."

[Laughter]

S: "... who's living with it and thriving with it," because many of us aren't looking at miracle cures; when you hit stage-4, a lot of treatments get taken off the table. So... and I work now with cancer patients to really help them deal with their fear and their grief; I think those are the 2 main things that I'm doing

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with them.

J: So if someone out there listening has cancer, what would be those first steps to dealing with the fear?

S: Well, if you've worked in this territory before, I mean, the most important thing is to get some support because I think it's a very arduous thing to do on your own, it even was for me and I'm very experienced at it. But mostly it's about noticing what's running through your head and what you're believing; I call it mind talk. The mind will just make things up and terrify you with what's going to happen, and you need to get that stuff out of your head and start verifying it and telling the truth about it. And one of the skills I put in my book is how do you do that. But everything we think is either true/false or don't know, but we act as if everything we think is true. And cancer is loaded with meanings. It's like a gun it's gets shot at you and you think the worst. You know, hair loss, control loss, pain, agony, misery, it all just runs through your head instant in lightning speed. And you need to get that stuff out of your head and you need to look at it in the cold light of day and you need to get very accurate about what you're dealing with and get as much information from your doctor as you can. A lot of patients don't want to know everything because they're so scared, but the more you know, the more power you have. And so it's about, get hold of reality, the reality of what you're dealing with; even if it's more tumors in your brain than they can count. And get hold of what you're making that mean before you make a decision. So I made it mean, "I'm going to lose my mind and I... I'm going to totally lose control." I didn't lose my mind and I didn't lose control, but I believed I was going to.

J: So after you grieved that night by the fireplace, did your beliefs about that start to change?

S: Yes, that was the night I wrote on a piece of paper, "I have cancer, cancer does not have me."

J: Hmm.

S: And that's... that turned my mindset around, what... that's why it's my mantra now. Because I still go into fear regularly; obviously, I'm human and that... that's what the mind does, it scares you regularly.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: But I... where I stood that night was, "I don't know what's going to happen," and 'I don't know' is a truth; we never know the future. And when you stand in not knowing, it... it's like standing at the sacred frontier between the world as you perceive it and the world as it really is.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: And I just stood in 'I don't know'; I don't know, I don't know. And not knowing kind of takes you in when you have no place else to go. And sometimes that's the best truth you can stand on is, "I don't know what's going to happen and I don't know what to do," but that can be enough to set you free. You know, it set me free and I didn't know what I was going to do, but it was enough to not know rather and to know; to imagine I knew, if that makes sense.

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J: Mm-hmm. So when you're in that place of 'I don't know', do you try to grab at, you know, a sense of meaning and... and wanting to live your purpose for whatever time you do have left or is it different?

S: No, it's... that's beautifully sad. I think living your purpose is... there's a chapter in my book called 'Know Your Purpose'. I think when you're in that 'don't know', that's when you can find your purpose again.

J: Mm.

S: When you're in your mind's fear and reactivity and imagining the worst, your purpose just disappears; it fades, it disappears in the mist. But when you stand in the clarity of 'I don't know', then you can get hold of your purpose again. And the purpose I got hold of at that time was to have a transformative rather than a terrifying experience. My purpose was to let cancer transform my life, whatever the outcome, live or die.

J: Mm. Wow, that's just so beautiful. And so... so when you're talking with others who also have stage 4 and it's not looking really hopeful, how do you help them come around to this idea that they still have a purpose?

S: Well, it's not that hard actually because they're kind of looking for their purpose. The first thing is to get them through the fear and then ask the question, not just, "What do you want to do to treat your cancer?" but, "How do you want to be while you're doing what you do? How do you want to be? Do you want this to be...?" And they often know, "I want to seize the day. I want to live whatever time I have left joyously." And it's actually not hard to get them to that point once they've released the fear because fear just hinders that. And sometimes, it's a serious question. I mean, I had a dear friend who was in his 70s and he had ocular cancer, it was behind his eye. And he said, "My purpose isn't to live as long as I can, Sophie, my purpose is to savor every moment. I've had my life and I want to spend time with my grandkids and eat what I like, drink what I like, and relish the moment; and that's my purpose," and that's what he did and he died at peace.

J: Mm, I love that. And I saw a story on your website of a teenage girl who had cancer and her parents, you know, can you tell us more about that story? Do you know which one I'm talking about?

S: Yes. She wasn't... she wasn't teenaged. she was 28.

J: Okay.

S: And she had terminal lung cancer. And I met her at a clinic and her family were devoted to her and they were devoutly Christian, as was she. And they encouraged her to do all the treatment she could do and they prayed for her and she was praying a lot. And she was terrified of... she kept saying, "I've just got to be positive and pray. I need to just be positive and pray, Sophie." I'm an empath so I could feel how frightened she was and I sat with her and I said, "Lorena, do you know it's not just okay to be terrified, but appropriate?" And she looked at me and just burst into tears and said, "Is it really?" she said because, "If I'm negative, then I'm going to feed my cancer, aren't I?" and I said, "No, darling, don't do

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that to yourself. Being scared isn't negative it's just being scared; you need to be scared. You're 28 years old and you're looking at death, of course you're scared." And she then... you know, she came and did a course with me over a period of time and she really learnt to feel her fear and let herself be negative and let herself be angry; she'd never been angry.

J: Mm.

S: And she raged against all of it and eventually, she did die aged 30, but she died... I really miss her; she was so young. But she really died at peace and she died at peace with her family. And it was hard for them when she was raging not praying, but they got it and they thanked me for what I gave her to this day, but she gave me more, far more, and I loved her dearly.

J: I'm sure so many people out there would love to get in touch with you and they're probably itching to learn more about that Facebook group, talk a little bit about that; how they could... you know, they could grab your book of course, 'The Cancer Whisperer', but what else? How else could they find support?

S: So, yes, grab my book. You can find me on Facebook, there's a page you can follow call the Sophie Sabbage, The Cancer Whisperer. I have a closed Facebook group you can ask to join if you have cancer or if you're caring for someone with cancer, and you can also visit my website at [sophiesabbage.com](http://sophiesabbage.com).

J: Beautiful. Well, you are still, you know, you... you have cancer, but cancer doesn't have you, so let's talk about some of your favorite things.

S: Sure.

J: Because you're still... you're thriving, you're not surviving. So... (Laughs)

S: Yeah, that's right.

J: So aside from cancer, do you have any other current struggles?

S: You know, that's... that's such an interesting question. I have many by the way. I mean, you know, I have lots of struggles; as we all do. I think the one I'm really... I'm really working on at the moment is that I have a tendency to... my therapist calls it, he said, "You hemorrhage generosity, Sophie."

J: (Laughs)

S: Which I love, I hadn't thought of it like that because I have a very generous spirit, but I have difficulty setting limits and holding boundaries and I often... I find myself doing a huge amount of work for free and not charging for it when actually my family really need an income.

J: Mm-hmm.

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S: And I tend to give a lot away, especially in the cancer world; it's hard for me to say, "Can you pay for this?" because you don't want to charge people with cancer for anything.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: I mean my Facebook group is free, obviously. So it's a struggle for me to say, "Can you pay me for something?" or to just say, "No, I can't do that, I need to conserve my energy." And I tend to say yes to what's asked of me a lot and then I get over tired and exhausted. So that's a struggle for me, for sure, but I am on it. (Laughs)

J: You're on it; you're transforming every day. (Laughs)

S: It's got a way to go though; I can tell you.

J: (Laughs). Well, what is a favorite habit that contributes to your success and transforming or anything else you're successful with?

S: I think I've already named it. I mean, breathing helps, by the way. I just...

J: (Laughs) I heard that.

S: You took a breath, so it's breathing; how we stopped breathing and breathing brings us present when we breathe consciously.

J: Mm-hmm.

S: But also verifying my mind talk; I do it every day. Everything we think is true, false or 'don't know'; my teacher Brad Brown told me that. And I have a habit of verifying, "Is what I'm thinking true or false or I 'don't know'?" and it's just a daily practice and it keeps me clear and awake and in a state of gratitude a lot of the time.

J: It sounds similar to meditation, what would you call it?

S: Well, I call it... we have a process, it's called the clarity process actually.

J: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

S: It has 5 steps that I won't go into because it will take too long; you can read that in my book and...

J: Okay.

S: ... you can read about it. But the heart of it is to actually verify what you're thinking and then replace it with the truth, "Well, if that's false, what's true? If I'm not enough, what is true? What's true as I am

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enough or, you know, I am who I am; that's enough."

J: Yeah.

S: And you stand on what's true instead of on the lies.

J: And share your favorite easy meal with us.

S: I love this question because my diets changing all the time and I'm a terrible cook; really terrible. My husband does almost all the cooking. But I'd probably say, easy meal, an avocado and feta salad.

J: Yum.

S: I love that; yum.

J: Yeah, really, I just had some avocado (Laughs). Okay, and your favorite kitchen gadget.

S: My husband.

[Laughter]

S: Terrible, isn't it?

J: (Laughs). Oh, I love it. I'm not even going to ask what that means. (Laughs)

S: I like the kettle as well for a nice cup of tea.

J: (Laughs). Oh my goodness. And your favorite...

[Laughter]

J: Your favorite book, Sophie.

S: Oh, my favorite book... this is hard to choose, but I'm going to say Mary Oliver's volume of poetry called 'Thirst'. You want to know why?

J: Yes, please.

S: Because she... in there is a poem called 'A Box Full of Darkness', and I think we all need to understand why a box full of darkness is also a gift.

J: Have you memorized that poem?

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S: Yes, I think so.

J: Try to say it if you can. (Laughs)

S: I think it's, "Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this too was a gift."

J: Mm, oh, that's beautiful.

S: So cancer was my box full of darkness, for sure.

J: And just stepping back into that conversation a bit, it just strikes me, you know, you could stay in that fear, but it feels so much better to be in this transformative place where you are. I mean... and plus you're making such a difference for everyone.

S: I hope so; I hope so.

J: Oh, I know so (Laughs); this is beautiful, the whole conversation.

S: Oh, thank you.

J: What's the best advice you've received?

S: Oh, again, really tricky; am I allowed to?

J: Sure.

S: I think the best advice is, my mentor was a man called Dr. Brad Brown, he was a unsung genius of the last century; I will sing him many times. He once said to me, "The warrior's way (and he meant the spiritual warrior's way), 7 times down, 8 times up, then repeat."

J: Yeah, that's great.

S: I like that.

J: I do too.

S: One of my doctors said to me very early on when I was in deep shock, he took me by the hand and he said, "Don't become a patient, Mrs. Sabbage, live your life." You know, it literally struck me in the chest and I went, "Okay, don't become a patient," and I didn't.

J: Wow. Well, Sophie, this whole conversation has touched my heart deeply. And for those of us who don't have cancer, still there are these dark experiences like you mentioned the... the box full of dark-

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ness poem.

S: Yeah.

J: We can learn so much from your... your attitude and how you've allowed it to transform yourself. So maybe whatever situation we're talking about, you know, "I have X, but X doesn't have me."

S: Yes.

J: Just beautiful.

S: Yes.

J: So I think 'The Cancer Whisperer' sounds like a book everyone needs to get because your attitude is beautiful.

S: Thank you.

J: Well, everyone, you can find links to Sophie's Facebook group and her book and everything else we've been talking about by going to [jenriday.com/49](http://jenriday.com/49). And now, Sophia, let's do the happiness formula. If you had to create a formula of 3 to 5 steps that contribute to your happiness, what would that include?

S: I would say I'm happiest when I'm loving, when I'm forgiving, when I'm self-accepting, and when I'm thankful.

J: Okay, beautiful. Loving, forgiving, self-accepting, and thankful.

S: Yeah.

J: Okay. Well, give our listeners one parting challenge and then we'll say goodbye.

S: Okay. I would challenge your listeners to write down 3 regrets that they have been harboring and then make a choice about each of those regrets. So you can either let them go, and I mean really, deeply let them go (write it on a piece of paper, throw it in a fire, burn it, whatever it takes) or choose an action to change the regret, whether it's making amends or reconnecting with someone or picking up your dream again. Because the only dreams that die are the ones that come true actually. So if there are any dreams you've let go of and you want to pick up... up again, pick them up. But my experience is, when you deal with your regrets, it helps you to feel your grief which heals and regret harms you. So let go of your regrets.

J: Well, Sophie, this is so beautiful and I'm grateful to have gotten to know you a little bit. And, again, everyone, you can find links to everything we've talked about at [jenriday.com/49](http://jenriday.com/49) or you can go to So-

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ophie's website at [sophiesabbage.com](http://sophiesabbage.com), and be sure to pick up her book, 'The Cancer Whisperer'. Sophie, I'm so honored to have been talking with you. Thank you so much for being on the show.

S: Oh, it's my honor too, Jen; Thank you.

J: After my interview with Sophie, I spent several days thinking, "You know, Sophie is the definition of living a life well-lived," and that's because she's taking a struggle and turning it into something transformative. She's facing something mountainously hard with courage and positivity and strength. And I hope that our takeaway for all of us listeners would be the same, that when hard times come or just a hard day happens, that we can face it with courage and positivity and strength just like Sophie. Join me next week when I talk with Shaunti Feldhahn, all about 'The 30 day kindness challenge'. Now, I've already recorded this interview and you're going to laugh because the entire time, she's talking about this challenge and I know I have to do it, I kept, "Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy," because it sounds so hard. But I'm doing it now for one of my kids, one of my button pushers, and it's going great; and it's just 3 little steps. So I can't wait for you to hear about it and to start implementing that in your own life. So I'll see you next time, and until then, make it a great week.

Outro: Thanks for listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast at [www.jenriday.com](http://www.jenriday.com).

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