

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

# Episode 66:

## Friendship Matters: Life Lessons from A 40-Year Friendship with Dr Sanda Bernstein & Dr Wendy Rapaport

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J: You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 66.

S: I think no matter what is your source of pain, if you have a friend, you're not alone and you can challenge it.

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 Jen Riday and I am so glad you're here. On our last episode I spoke with Tammy Cannon, all about balancing motherhood with your need to grow, learn, create, and pursue your passions. And isn't this the age-old question, "How do we as moms find time to do some of the things we love?" Tammy had some great insight in that episode. And if you haven't listened to that already, be sure to go back and do so. Today, I'll be talking with Sanda Bernstein and Wendy Rappaport; yes, it's our first double interview on the podcast and they talk all about friendship. And they have been friends for 40 years, talking every single week on Tuesday at 9 AM and that is 2000 phone conversations. So these 2 know a bit about friendship and they share a lot of their tips in this episode. So let's go ahead and dive in.

On today's episode, I'm talking with Sanda Bernstein and Wendy Rappaport and they wrote a book together. This is the very first Vibrant Happy Women interview with 2 guests; I'm so excited. So let me tell you about them and then we'll launch right in. So Sanda Bernstein is a clinical psychologist. She has worked in both school districts and universities. She's trained in psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, and as a school psychologist, she has a private practice in which she sees adolescents and adults. She's married with 2 grown children and 5 grandsons and she lives in Manhattan.

Wendy Rappaport is a clinical psychologist and she specializes in psychology related facets of the healthcare field, working with providers and patients. She is an adjunct professor at the Diabetes Research Institute part of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and at the University of Maine Graduate School of Social Work. Now we'll explain in a minute why this is. Well, I'll tell you now. She lives half of the year in Maine and half of the year in Florida; how lucky is that? She has a private practice working with people coping with diabetes and she's also married and a stepmother to 2 grown children and she has a granddaughter and a great grandson.

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These 2 met at a lecture when they were college aged and Sanda was pregnant and had to go to the bathroom and they ended up chatting in the bathroom and never stopped talking. So now they are great friends and they just released a book together called 'Friendship Matters: memoir, life lessons, laughter'. Welcome to the show Sanda and Wendy.

S: Thank you, thank you thank you for inviting us.

W: It's a pleasure to be here.

J: Yeah, this is going to be amazing. I'm so excited; a little party here. Well, I'm sure each of you has a quote to share, and so let's start with Wendy what quote would you like to share with us today?

W: So I've modified the original quote I probably lived my life by which is, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." And I've changed that to, "Do unto others as they would prefer you do unto them," as I realized that this is part of the... the friendship issue is that we... we have to really know our friends, what would please them because sometimes we find ourselves doing things that please us, not them. So...

J: Okay, that's great advice. Okay, and you said I call her Sandy so I'm going to switch because we're friends now, we're talking about friendship. So Sandy, let's call you that.

W: (Laughs)

S: Okay, that feels great. You know, this it sounds kind of strange to give you a quote from an ancient Jewish sage, but here it goes because it seems so contemporary, especially with women, and that is, "If I'm not for myself, who will be for me? If I'm only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?" And it strikes me for myself and most of the women I know that we're caregivers, and it's so easy to give ourselves away and not take time to develop ourselves and who we are inside. So it's saying, "If I'm not for myself..." that's first, "If I'm not for myself, who's going to be for me?" And then, only then, it's, "If I'm only for myself, who am I? What am I?" And last, don't procrastinate, "If not now, when?" So that's my quote.

J: I love that; don't procrastinate, now's the day to be for yourself. (Laughs)

S: Right.

J: I love it. Okay, let's talk about each of your low points in life. You have some great experience behind you with so many... you know, with kids and grandkids and stepchildren and grandkids and a great grandson. So what would be your low point, Sandy, and then we'll go to Wendy's.

W: Sandy, don't we like it better when we're... don't we like it better when we're finding out somebody else is low point.

[Laughter]

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S: So true. This is when we... in fact, it's in in our book. This is one that Wendy helped me with. It's an embarrassing low point because it's not that significant. But I was working as a school psychologist for many years and I had trained the man who became my boss. He wanted me to switch being a psychologist in the building the early childhood young, young kids where I had worked for 9 years and I had set up relationships with people, and he said, "No, we need you in the middle school." And he asked me if I wanted to, I said, "No, I didn't," and the next thing I know, he had, without consulting me, switched me.

J: (Gasps) Ooh!

S: And I had trained him to be in his senior position and I was... I can't tell you... I was in a rage, a total rage, so much so that I resigned.

J: Mm.

S: I never spoke to him again and I couldn't get past it. In behavior, I got past it. I went into private practice, I've never been happier, but there the anger never left me until speaking with Wendy years later, in which she and I talked about forgiveness and moving on and that it's not helpful for me to hold on to anger. So I'm not saying it happened overnight, but I got past the low point and now feel like, you know, he did what he needed to do. I feel that I was treated shabbily, but things happen in life.

J: Well, I have to ask you a next question because everyone wants the answer to this. How did you forgive?

S: You know, one of the things that Wendy kept saying to me was, "Sometimes, you just have to move on. It's not good for you." And it was like kind of reminding myself, "I'm fortunate in my life. Things have moved on in a good way. He didn't mean to be mean to me, he did what he thought was best." And I think it was mainly that I wanted to unburden myself with carrying angry feelings; it was weighing too heavily on me.

J: Mm-hmm. So it was for yourself.

S: It was for myself.

J: Yeah.

W: And one of the ways that we talked about, you know, just professionally in our book is... and also in this sense, is having empathy. It's part of emotional literacy in the first place that we know what we feel. But if this guy, some empathy for him, maybe you didn't have the courage to tell her directly and... you know, or that he felt badly that he felt like it was a compliment, "I want you to back here, even though it's not your needs," but if you judge to the good somehow that whatever he did to you was some need that he had to take over yours. So when we have a little empathy... though it's really hard after all those years that Sandy has suffered to go for that emphasis, sometimes you just have to jump into forgiving. But I think if we have empathy for people, we can usually lessen our anger and our hurt.

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J: And I love what you said, judge to the good; that's a great phrase.

W: Mm-hmm, yeah.

J: And what about you...?

W: Okay, okay, I took it from 'Something Jewish', right.

[Laughter]

J: I wouldn't know; I wouldn't know. Well, Wendy, tell us your low point and what you learned from that.

W: You know, it's interesting, my father died when I was 3 and a half. And I remember, my mother dropped me off and I was wailing. She had to go on because she had to go back to work. And I remember feeling such shame and humiliation. Then about a year or so later, you know, when I was in school, I remember the shift. I raised my hand in like my first grade class and I said, "How do you spell 'deceased'?" So I felt like I had shifted from, you know, being ashamed of being alone, my mother leaving me, my father leaving me, to, "I'm going to tell you and I'm going to show you how smart I am because I know the word 'deceased,'" you know?

J: Mm-hmm.

W: Because we were filling out information cards. And so I was going to be the one to tell and I was going to do it proudly. So I felt that was such a... you know, and it's more of a memory of an unconscious turnaround from how you felt about something to how you decided to feel about something.

J: At 4 and a half.

W: I wasn't going to be hiding.

J: That's impressive.

W: Yeah.

J: Uh-huh.

W: (Laughs)

J: So your mom had go back to work and that's why you felt abandoned?

W: Yes. I felt abandoned by, you know, losing my father as well.

J: Well, right, of course.

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W: She secondly also had to... and of course, you know, how awful for her.

J: Right.

S: And, yeah.

J: Good for you.

W: So that's the only one I'm telling you. All the others are really, really embarrassing.

[Laughter]

W: So I'm only telling you one back where I was 3 and a half. So, you know what's interesting? I was remembering (because I loved your... we both loved your questions of the... to think about things) that I ran for president of my class in 10th grade and I lost by 3 votes. And I remember like, "How on earth did I recover?" because then next year, I ran again and I won.

J: Oh my goodness!

W: But I wondered, like I don't remember the feelings around it, but it's always been a symbol for me of like, "How did I do that?" because you put yourself out there. I mean, we all have private shame, but that one's public, "How on earth did I have the courage?" So that's the last time I was brave, I was 15.

[Laughter]

J: Well, so you're talking a bit about turnarounds, how...

W: Yes.

J: ... you both shared a turnaround. So tie that in with what you talked about in your book; if it ties in.  
(Laughs)

W: Oh, of course.

S: Say that, I'm not sure I understand your question.

W: Well, you know, I'll say the thing, you know, for me now. The turnarounds in my life, the small little insults, I feel always if I am patted with a sense of friendship that, for example, I know... Sandy and I speak to each other every Tuesday morning at 9 o'clock. We are... you know, maybe you could say we're in therapy with each other; we've done it for 40 years.

J: Ah, that's great.

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W: So I know that every Tuesday, I can tell her what I'm ashamed of, you know, she doesn't have that much patience for what I'm proud of, but...

[Laughter]

W: ... (just kidding of course) but the friendship is really the whole big structure, for me, about comfort. As a friend, knowing that they're there for you or knowing that they care about you, and that they can help you think about something differently, you know, so in other words the forgiveness or taking personal gratitude to get us in a better mood or not making assumption it's about people, our friends are the ones who help us do this. Because if we're stuck with our own, you know, words, then they're going to be maybe negative or depressing. So I think, no matter what is your source of pain, if you have a friend, you're not alone and you can challenge it.

J: Yeah, that's really great.

S: Yeah, and I think kind of the point or one of the points in our book, not only as a celebration of our own friendship, but an opportunity that we had in writing it to look at what works for us that we can talk to other people about and have them appreciate how you can deepen a friendship that you already have and what a friendship can do for you, how it helps you be so much more solid and so much more centered in life. So friendship is so much what we're about in terms of making life, getting past those low points.

J: So you mentioned the book meant... it talks about what works for you, let's go there. What has worked for you and having (oh my gosh!) a 40-year friendship? That is like how many phone calls?

[Laughter]

J: 2000 weekly phone calls approximately.

S: Right.

J: Incredible. (Laughs)

S: And somehow we managed to maintain it, even... we never ever or very rarely lived in the same location. Most of the time, as you can see, Wendy was in Florida or in Maine and I was in New York. So this was always long-distance which took a lot of effort to maintain.

J: Yeah!

S: But I think that...

W: And we...

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S: Yeah, go ahead, Wendy.

W: No, I was just going to say we also made a point of having like same time next year occasions. Like we would meet... you know, we always meet at least once or twice or 3 times a year and talked the entire time, and I always loved... because our husbands always say, "Well, what do you talk about?"

[Laughter]

S: "How could you talk so long?"

W: Right.

J: So what do you think it is about each other that kept you stuck like glue together? Why... why the 2 of you? What made it special?

S: Yeah, you know, that's something that we had to think about in writing the book as well. I think there's something very willing to be trusting and open about Wendy that I really pre-fitted, that a feeling of she wanted to know me without judgment. And that, over time, I came to trust that that she always, like she always had my back whatever she did, even if she was nudging me, "Sandy, you could do better with this. Why don't you talk to him about that?"

J: (Laughs)

S: And Wendy is definitely that kind of person. She's much... where I could be shy and kind of, "No, I'll avoid it," she's somebody who's helped me by saying, "No, go for it. Say something. Ask for it," or... but it was always done, it's always been done in a loving way in which I felt like she only wanted what was best for me. And also where we've really learned over the years to be good communicators, that if our feelings are hurt, we try to talk about it, not bury it. Because we always say, even if we have a hard conversation, we feel better afterwards and closer.

J: So what kind of things have come up over the phone ....

S: (Laughs)

J: ... throughout that 40 years period? How do you have your feelings heard on the phone? I mean, I would imagine you could, but I would love to tell or hear if you have a story.

W: What would be the most recent one?

[Laughter]

J: I out you on the spot.

W: Well, you know what? Writing... you know, writing the book together has really put wonderful tests

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for us.

S: Mm-hmm.

W: and it's made us very conscious in slow motion of, "You didn't get back to me so quickly. Were you disappointed in something I said?" or, "I hear in your voice." And sometimes, we've over guessed, but it always matters to us that the other one might feel something. And what we really both appreciate it is, it doesn't mean we're bad if we caused something in the other, it means that the other is letting us know something about them. So, for example, I mean, I'm... I always push the button for 'go'. You know, and one of the things that... that I love about Sandy is that she's different than me that way. She has taught me how to slow down and go deeper rather than to act on something. So she's sort of my impulse control person, and I feel like everybody needs that little bit of Sandy in them. So we are... we have really loved our differences. You know, she's made me more thoughtful and I've made her jump off the cliff.

[Laughter]

J: That is the best!

S: But... but I still need to look to make sure there's cushioning at the bottom.

J: (Laughs)

W: She has a big thing that there should be water in the pool; I don't know what that's a bout.

S: Right, right. I remember that example, Wendy, fairly recently when we were talking about a response that we wanted to give to someone, we were trying to formulate it. We were both on the phone with each other, we wanted to formulate a response just like a public relations person about the book. And we are talking about it, Wendy, unbeknownst to me, is working on texting it. So I said, "Before you do it, I have another thought," and she said, "Too late, it's already done."

J: (Gasps) Mm.

S: And... and so like she can tell I'm saying, "Uh, Wendy!" And then we just go past it and say, "Well, that's who Wendy is and there's no harm done. And I appreciate that I myself could be waiting until the next week to get the email out. So I'm glad of her immediacy."

J: That's great.

W: And so we've learned... and one of the... one of the points we talked about it is really respecting and learning from the differences of people. We've always thought that, but we didn't realize we were so different till we wrote the book. And we loved it even more; I realized how much I value it. I feel like, if I do something myself, I get an 85, if I talked to Sandy first, I might get 95, you know? And I love... I've

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learned to love not just 'good enough', which has always been my thing that I like to be good enough. I've really learned that in using her friendship for me, I am better, I'm just... I'm better; and I feel better.

S: And... and I think we... part of what we wanted to say in writing the book was, like this isn't unique; I mean, everybody can have this. We don't have some magical abilities, we... but we want people to know, "Oh my god, if you can have a really special friend in your life, you're... you... you're so fortunate; and it's worth looking for and investing in and working on."

J: So what would you say, if you had to narrow down what your books about into 3 points or the 3 big themes, what would those be?

S: I think there's one point, and Wendy mentioned it before, was the importance of empathy, the importance of really, in not just knowing yourself, but being able to look at another person with, not just tolerance, but appreciation of where they come from. And that... that's kind of what we're saying that we did with one another and it wasn't so difficult. But like we live in such polarized times that I think we really are aware of how important it is to find a way to empathically respect where the other person is coming from so that we don't all live in their own little bubbles.

J: Mm.

S: And I think that's one of our wonderful... the important message just we wanted to send out there.

J: Well, that's really important. How would people go about developing that empathy for other people?

W: You know, it's actually part of emotional literacy. You know, part of it is, number one, self-awareness; that's one part. Recognizing that you feel angry or you feel offended and validating it and not putting yourself down for it. And the way that you develop the empathy is to say, "I don't like having this anger. Can I look at this another way?"

J: Mm-hmm.

S: And you say, "I wonder..." you know, and even in the area of politics, which is the hardest one to apply it with, when you realize there's someone you've really liked and then you find out their politics are so different than you, the way... you could either say, "I'm not talking you for 4 years," you could say, "You know, I just don't like you anymore," or you could say, "You know, I like you so much," and you feel so differently about it. "I got to realize that, the other side, I'm going to have some empathy for like what your opinion is because I like you and I want to think about it from where you come from, how do you make that decision." And those kinds of things, that sense of... even if empathy doesn't come naturally to you, but you ask that question, "I wonder how they came to that? I like them. I wonder how they came to that?" will make you lower your anger or lower your sense of difference.

J: Mm-hmm.

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S: And it can be a practice that you, you know, it... you know, in a way, being a good friend is a mindful practice, you know, so that you are...

J: Yeah.

S: ... consciously saying, "Let me work my empathy muscle," you know, you have to train to be a good athlete so now you have to be a good emotional athlete, in a sense, for the empathy.

J: Right. And one of the key components of mindfulness is that non-judgmental acceptance.

W: Mm-hmm.

S: So that's a really great analogy; I never thought about mindfulness and empathy being so related. Okay, so your book's about the importance of empathy, what else would you say is an important part of the book?

W: Ah... go ahead, Sandy. I'm I was about to say that she's a day older than me, yeah. (Laughs)

S: Do you realize, with all of our years together, we were born one day apart.

J: Oh my goodness! It was like meant to be, I think.

S: I think so. (Laughs)

J: Easy, great.

S: I think we go through, in the book, an awareness of the little and not so little ways in which peoples can be... relate better to one another. And it could be things like... and we give examples from our own lives, but things like, "Don't make assumptions." I'm forever in my life assuming I know why my friend didn't call me or assuming I know why the person in front of my apartment building just kind of turned the other way. Like, it's so easy for me to go... come from a hurt place or thinking the worst, thinking, "Oh they don't care," or, "I'm not that important." And oftentimes when I check it out, I think, "Oh, they were preoccupied with something," or, "They forgot," or it had nothing to do with me. So the idea that... we came up with a whole bunch of things like that where...

J: Oh yeah.

S: We say, "Look at the ways that we could make life bumpier for one another with..." then it needs to be. And not making assumptions is one of them, and they're like... we did it in an A through G kind of schematics though it's easy to remember. But it's a kind of another example of... there's lots of ways that... this isn't just about friendship, but the book is about how to make getting along with people and feeling good inside to yourself, how to make that easier.

J: Wow.

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W: Yes, and in a sense, our friendship, that we are coaches of each other for those kinds of things.

S: Right.

W: So it's not just talking about the stress between each other, it's the stress in other parts of our lives. So, for example, one of the ABCs, one of them is criticism; learning to give and get criticism in better ways. So that in criticism, you know, how we're always so ready to tell somebody off and tell them what is bad about them, and we really try to ask people to say, you know, "You have always been patient with me, I was wondering why you yelled at me yesterday so violently?"

J: Mm.

W: You know, and so you remind people and then you're reminding yourself and that even the phrasing of that criticism, you're beginning to have empathy of why that person did blow off on you. And so that's a skill set. You know, some of the skill sets that as psychologists we teach the patience, but we have now done them for ourselves and we do them in our lives. So assum... not making assumptions, being able to give, you know, healthy, positively framed criticism, so that a person isn't just bad, but the specific behavior, they must have had a reason; you know, you're already building in that... that empathy.

J: Yeah, and I love how you give that positive label, "Well, you've always been so kind to but \_\_."

W: Mm-hmm.

J: I love that. I'm grabbing on to that one right now (Laughs). Well, so everyone...

W: (Laughs)

J: I'm going to remind our listeners that your book is called 'Friendship Matters: memoir, life lessons, laughter' by Sanda Bernstein and Wendy Rappaport; who I'm talking to right now. And, wow, if you want a 40 year friendship, you've got to grab this book. I know so many of my listeners ask, you know, "How do you develop a deep friendship in this day and age with fast speed of living and technology-based friendships? How do you develop the real thing?" so everyone be sure to grab their book, 'Friendship Matters'. And now, we'll dive in and talk about a few of your favorite things, and let's start with a favorite habit that contributes to your success.

W: I like exercise, and I like it because I have... it gives me permission to multitask and then I have an excuse to watch TV.

J: Aha!

[Laughter]

W: And so I find... so I find that it relaxes me, it makes me mindfully, it slows me down, it gives me time

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to think about things; and so I really like the discipline of it.

J: So you can exercise and watch TV and think; that is beautiful.

[Laughter]

W: And also fall down; did I mention the fall down?

J: Fall down.

[Laughter]

J: How about you? How about you, Sandy?

S: One of my newer habits that I'm really trying to maintain is to... not thinking that I've known all the answers for myself, but reaching out like when I get stumped on something. Whether it's a problem with people that I'll call Wendy for or it could be a problem in other aspects of life and I'll call on my husband for it or my son for it, my daughter for it. That idea that I don't have to do it all by myself, that there are other people that I can say to, "You know, I'm not sure how I'm handling this, what do you think?" And it feels like such a freeing kind of experience to do it that way, not thinking I have to solve it all myself.

J: I love that. And while you were saying that, it kind of triggered a question in my mind, this is not on script or anything, but, you know, a lot of women lament that their spouses aren't very good listeners, and can you speak a little bit to you the importance of having female friends for that emotional support and your thoughts on that?

S: You know, you have another 5 hours?

[Laughter]

W: By the way, I feel like people... you know, I think women need to teach their men how to listen to them better, and I think that we need to talk better to men. So, you know, like sometimes when I'm talking my husband, I go like, "Oh, I see my time is up; your eyes are starting to drift in other directions."

[Laughter]

W: So I'm never offended and, you know, that's part of the... that's one of our skills by the way is boundaries. It's realizing that somebody's capacity, you know, may be different than yours, it's not a put-down of you, it's just them telling you about who they are. So sometimes, I say to my husband, "So just keep looking at me, I want to finish the story and I'll come to my own conclusion."

[Laughter]

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W: So sometimes you last and then I get... then I get another 2 minutes in.

J: Yeah, right.

W: But I think women do have more patience for each other to hear the details of stories or the repetition, but not all women do; so when they offend you, I think you have to say something also. You have to learn how to stop them and say, "I need you to do a little more. You seem short with me today. Am I boring you? I don't blame you because it's boring to me too," and give them a chance to...

J: (Laughs)

W: ... you know, come back.

J: That's great.

W: That's skill, by the way.

J: Yeah.

W: It's like a naming; a naming of what you see, you know, identifying it, you know?

J: Yeah.

W: It's... it's so important.

J: Hmm, a naming of what you see; that's great. Well, so let's hear about your favorite easy meals; start with Sandy.

S: Oh, this is... well, you have to remember I live in the city and it's only 2 of us and I never like to cook. So my favorite easy meal is taking in from the local gourmet market where they have fresh salmon every day and fresh turkey and fresh spinach pie. And my favorite easy meals are different each day, but unfortunately, I have to admit they're not based on my cooking them.

J: Perfect, my kind of use meal too (Laughs). How about you, Wendy?

W: Does, candy, cake, and ice cream count?

J: Yes, sure.

W: Yeah.

J: (Laughs)

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W: Only if it's portion control, I don't want to (unclear) [26:24] out there.

[Laughter]

W: But maybe it's because we're women of a certain age, though nobody would ever have talked about my cooking ever anyway.

J: Mm-hmm.

W: But, you know, what I like best is also takeout or delivery; even better than I don't even have to go out of the house... (Laughs)

J: That's great.

W: ... to pick up; pick it up, yeah.

J: Yeah. And... well, so we... the next question is about kitchen gadgets; you can pretend you have a favorite one or one you might have used to like.

[Laughter]

S: Well (unclear) [26:56]... yeah, go ahead, Wendy.

W: I was going to tell you that mine is the telephone, it's, "How soon can you be here, oh Chinese food place?"

[Laughter]

W: But your turn, Sandy.

S: Well, mine is understandably a microwave.

J: Mm.

S: Reheating is just been a lifesaver for me.

W: (Laughs)

S: Whenever I take the food in, its... and we're saying it with humor, but it's really true. Like there's so many things that we want to put our energies into, and right now this time of my life, putting it into meal preparation, unless it's for my family for an occasion, it isn't where I want to put my energy, and I feel very mindful of how I want to spend my time.

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J: Yeah, I like that a lot; that's perfect. And a favorite book, Wendy.

W: I probably should say 'Little Women'.

J: Mm-hmm.

W: Or actually, 'The Prince of Tides'. I think what I loved about 'The Prince of Tides' was the psychologists part and the complexity of people, yeah.

J: Okay, and Sandy.

S: Yeah, I love women writers and I love women writers who write about the evolution, the development of a woman as she's tested with adversity. So I was thinking of the one... the most... maybe one of the more recent ones that I've read it's 'Americanah' by N. Adichie and it's about a Nigerian woman and her coming to America and her love life and how she has to manage her love life with her... her ambitions for herself. And it's a beautifully written book, but it... it has to do with the evolution of a woman, which always interested me.

J: Yeah, then you must love the podcast that you're on right now.

[Laughter]

S: Absolutely.

W: Absolutely.

J: (Laughs)

S: You know, it's funny, I meant... I'm in a book club and I always love the one I'm with. I mean I... you know, nobody ever asked me to be a critic, nobody ever asked me to recommend a book, they go like, "We know that you liked it."

J: (Laughs)

S: So...

J: You like them all?

S: I do. And so... and, you know, what I really love about reading, I love about reading and being in a book club or with a friend who I can discuss it with, because it's... that's it's the stimulation of what the ideas are, that it's what it does to us, what it... you know, what it brings by talking about. You know, things to, you know, amongst ourselves, my favorite friendship thing, yeah.

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J: Plus the excuse to see each other regularly; that's so great.

W: Absolutely.

S: Definitely.

J: And what's the best advice each of you has received.

S: I was thinking that, for me, the best advice is, "Don't let fear stop you." That most of the time, the things that I push myself past, even though I'm afraid, I'm proud of myself or pleased with myself after I've done it, and if I had given it to my fear, I would be really disappointed because most of the fear resides inside me; it's not coming from outside.

J: Yeah, just kind of something to jump over a little hurdle.

S: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

J: Okay. And, Wendy, what's the best advice you've received?

W: Really honoring my independence. I worked with this physician at one point and, you know, he's an MD so of course he's so powerful and strong. And I went in to him to say, "Well, what do you think about my working with his family? You know, what do you think I should do?" and he looked at me he goes like, "I hired you so that you could know those things." And it was so interesting. It was so liberating about not ever bowing to someone because they're a man or a doctor or stronger or richer, it was about, "Trust yourself and don't look to please other people, look... look to know them, and just be independent," I like that.

J: Yeah, just be independent. And so at the time both of you went into practice, did you feel kind of among the minority? I mean, I'm making assumptions about when that time might be, but tell us what it was like and when that was and how it was to be independent like that at that time.

W: Well, you know, I started as a hospital social worker and then I went on to get my doctorate. But the story that I was telling you, what was so enlightening to me that this doctor really wanted me to be independent, and that was so different from everything else I did or anyone else I knew after him.

J: Mm-hmm.

W: Because I remember when I was finishing my internship and there would be these team meetings, and I would start talking and saying, "You know, I think diabetes, that there's a psychological aspect," and the doctors would say to me, "What are you talking about? It's a physical illness." And so I would feel like, "How can I keep my voice..." you know...

J: Mm-hmm.

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S: "...and make people know that you could have an illness and know what to do, but you might not do it?" and that's where the psychology comes in. So I feel like it was a really a hill to climb against, you know, the masculinity of medicine, the masculinity of medical doctors and, you know, the male-driven society; just really trusting that women had so much to offer. And here we are again with the same (Laughs)... with the same issues.

J: Ah, yeah. Well... yeah, right. But did you feel for a while there at least until this year that things seem to be improving?

W: Absolutely.

J: Yeah.

W: Absolutely. And I... you know what? I still think that there's solid but, you know, you have to not be shocked by challenge and not be furious, be empathic to why do people... you know, why they do what they do, and it doesn't have something to do with you. Keep your boundary and then stay strong.

J: Right.

S: And call a... and call a friend to remind you to hold on to those kinds of feelings because it's really hard to do it alone.

J: Yes, those feelings of confidence, yeah.

S: Yeah.

W: Yeah.

J: Yeah, that's great.

W: And they come with being able to say, "Here's what I didn't do well and I was human. Here's what I could do better next time; I'm still good." You know, in the book, I write about when I went to Maine, I was like 40, I've been practicing and for a long time already and my husband said to me, "You know, when you get to Maine just remember, you know, you're wearing too much lipstick, way too long earring..."

J: (Laughs)

W: "... your clothes are too loud."

J: (Laughs)

W: And I said, "Oh, and those are the reasons you fell in love with me, right?" and, you know, he laughed. He's... but he wanted me to be successful, of course. And so when I left the first group that I ran, you

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know, women, at the end, said to me like, "Oh my god, you know, I'm not coming back, you know, you're so strong," and I said to her and to the group, "You know, wow, I love your honesty; say more about what you mean. Boy, do you have leadership. Other people now have learned the rule that, if you're not happy, you can challenge; thank you."

J: Yeah.

W: So I was brave and strong and I got home, I started crying, and I decided to be a bartender.

J: (Laughs)

W: And then... because there is a crossover in skills. And then, about 2 hours later, she found my home number and she called me and she said, "Thank you so much. You know, I'm a bully and you accepted me."

J: Aaw.

W: So I hung up and I go like, "Never mind! I can stay and practice as a psychologist."

[Laughter]

J: So... so did you tone down your lipstick like your husband, you know, asked or you just... you went in your full glory?

W: Yes, I went back in my full glory, but it did take me about a year.

[Laughter]

J: Well...

W: People would say, "Where's Wendy? Where's Wendy" you know?

J: Oh, that's funny. Well, so I want to remind our listeners that they can find links to the books you mentioned and everything we've been discussing, and of course a link to your own book, 'Friendship Matters', on our show notes page at [jenriday.com/66](http://jenriday.com/66). And now my favorite part of the show is the happiness formula. So for both of you, if you had to create a formula of actions that maximize your happiness, what would that include? And let's start with Sandy.

S: Okay. I think the first one for me is the importance of staying connected with the people I love. Like, if I feel connected in and embedded in the love of family, friends, that's like a core for me to feel happy. And then I want to stay engaged in the activities that are meaningful to me. And they tend to have a... it might be involved in work where I'm helping people or could be involved in gardening or doing something that's creative, but staying invested is really important for me. And the other is like, slowing it

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down to stay appreciative of the world around me; just appreciative of life. It feels like, when I can keep doing that, stay connected to people, stay invested and stay appreciative, it feels like I'm on a good path to happiness.

J: Oh, that's great, perfect; connected, invested, and appreciative, great. How about you, Wendy?

W: Oh, wait, those were mine!

[Laughter]

J: No that's fine. If you have the same, it makes them all the more powerful.

W: You know, the other thing that I would add and, you know, deeply, I also feel about always doing everything you do connected to a friend. Sandy and I have a slogan, you know, "What would Sandy say?" and she says, "What would Wendy say?"

J: Aaw.

W: So that we... you know, we either feel the approval or we feel the challenge from each other. So, you know, the friendship is part of it. The other part is spending a lot of time with altruism; that when we are in... another part... you know, it's partly connected to the empathy. When we do things for other people, it's so good for us.

J: Mm-hmm.

W: And the third thing would be the creativity. I personally write poetry and I actually wrote a book called 'On the Couch with a Good Enough Poet: How an Average Neurotic Became an Average Poet and Lived Happily Ever After'.

J: Ah!

W: That's the whole title. And so like that was a pretty good time. But I've really never gotten that much better as a writer, but I love writing. So creative doesn't mean excellence, it means doing. So I find that that keeps me happy.

J: So connection, altruism, and creativity.

W: Yes.

J: That is a good book title.

[Laughter]

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J: And I'm curious, you know, you guys really need these bracelets, 'what... 'WWWS?' and 'WWSS?'.

S: Mm-hmm.

J: "What would Wendy say?" and, "What would Sandy say?" I think that would be the cutest thing. (Laughs)

W: You're right.

J: Okay, and now a challenge for our listeners from each of you.

S: Well, I think we both were talking before to each other about, like a challenge really is to read our book and get a friend and deepen that friendship. Like, that's what... like, we want you to be connected with your friend. And I'm speaking for us, but I only need to speak for me here, but I think like I want to challenge everyone to connect better to a friend.

J: Okay. Anything to add to that, Wendy?

W: I agree.

J: Mm-hmm.

W: Yes. I think do it consciously because, you know, good manners come from practice and habits. And in some ways, being a good friend has a lot of, you know, what maybe you would call it manners, and it's fun to do with another person and to improve; you know, be accountable and enjoy each other. I challenge you to make a good friend even better. There was an article written about the book and it was called 'Friends who analyze together stay together'. And...

J: Ah, yeah!

W: Yeah, and that... because we're just psychologists, but, you know, as people, maybe we're... we were born to be a psychologist; who knows? But I think it's a great skill set; so do it consciously and skillfully.

J: Alright.

W: Besides the fact it's just easy and fun but, you know, when in doubt, use a little skill.

J: Perfect. Well, so everyone, go out and grab their book, 'Friendship Matters: memoir, life lessons, laughter'. Read it and then deepen a friendship because we all with love and deserve actually to have a friendship like Wendy and Sandy. And I want to thank you both for being on the show, this has been so much fun, and I can't wait to grab your book.

S: Thank you so much for interviewing us, it was wonderful.

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J: Thanks for being here.

W: Thanks for the wonderful work that you do; yes, thank you.

J: Thank you. Take care.

Thank you for joining us. And I'll be back next week talking with Kate O'Brien, all about building self-trust and self-compassion during your journey. So often, we can feel compassion and empathy for others, but we struggle to feel it for ourselves as we face perfectionism and guilt and feelings of 'not good enough'. So join Kate and I as we chat about this and many other things, and I will see you next week. Take care.

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

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