

Emily: I'm Emily Kumler and this is Empowered Health. This week on Empowered Health. We're going to be talking about pivoting in our careers, but before we get to that, I want to do a little plug to remind everybody to [sign up for the newsletter at empoweredhealthshow.com](https://empoweredhealthshow.com) and to [consider a donation](#). We're trying to keep this project running purely on donations. That means that if you have listened to more than one episode and you're enjoying this, we really are counting on you to pony up because we need to get paid. So if you like what you're hearing and you want more of it, please consider a donation which you can do at our website through [Patreon](#) and also [sign up for the newsletter](#) because we're sharing extra information in the newsletter and it's a great way for us to offer free products and fun things as well as sort of flushing some of this out for you. So if you don't have time to listen to an episode, you still get some nuggets of information that are helpful in terms of navigating your own health and your own sense of sort of body autonomy as you are going to the doctor or reading research or you see a news article and you're surprised by it, chances are we're going to be talking about it. So please sign up for the newsletter, share this with your friends. We hear from a lot of people that they share it and that they talk about it together and that's like one of the best signs to me that we're doing something impactful. So please keep that up. [Follow us on social media](#) and generally try to find ways that you can let other people know that there is a source out there that's really trying to look hard and critically at women's health so that we can all lead better, happier, healthier lives. So this week we are going to be talking about pivoting, which is basically this idea of like you're in one kind of career or you take a break from your career and then you decide to get back in or you decided to do something different and what does that look like? One of the big things for me is that we often have this idea of like this is what I was trained to do, so this is what I have to do. But actually in fact if you go back and you look at the labor force 50 years ago, it was really different. It was like people were getting trained to do jobs, so the job interview or the ad in the newspaper for a job was more about, hey, are you curious about this thing? Are you interested in this thing? I mean, that's how almost all tech companies hired. Now we have this idea of like you have to already know how to do the job before you start, which makes I think it more intimidating in terms of seeking jobs that you might be really, really good at and you might be really interested in, but that you don't know enough about. You know, this is important for a number of reasons. We're going to hear that women are sort of less confident about their ability to jump into a new position and we're going to hear from an expert who's going to sort of talk to us about how you can reposition the skills that you have been acquiring over the past few years for the job that you really want to have. The big takeaway for me, this episode is also about a sense of purpose. And I think you know, as we all look towards this new year as a time to hone in on things that bring us joy, sense of purpose is actually super important to your health. So there's a couple of studies which we'll link to and we'll probably include in the newsletter this week that look at [sense of purpose as a better predictor of death than smoking, drinking or exercise](#).¹ And these are associations, right? So we always say like take this, you know for what it is. I think sense of purpose is probably very, very hard to measure. But that being said, there's another big study on this too and it links a low sense of

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https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2734064?utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_term=052419

purpose to an increased risk of cardiovascular death, which we know is the [leading cause of death for women](#)². So there's a part of me that feels like, you know, what sense of purpose is also sort of just a day to day happiness. I think if you feel like you're contributing to something in a meaningful way, then you feel connected to something bigger than yourself. That is so, so important to the sort of overall living your life kind of feeling. So we're going to get into all that this week and hopefully give you guys some really tangible takeaways so that you're able to apply this in ways that are meaningful and allow you to get that job that you want or to think about the job that you have now and what sort of skills you'd like to be adding to your repertoire. So we're going to start the episode by talking to a woman who completely changed industries. She was very successful at what she was doing, but she didn't feel fulfilled. And she's going to tell us how she came to that conclusion and what it led her to.

Melini: I'm [Melini](#)³, I'm a yoga teacher in New York and I've been teaching yoga since 2010 so quite a while. Before that I worked in finance in investment banking. So originally when I moved to New York city, it was to start a career in investment banking. But in 2008 with the recession, I took a break and really took a moment to figure out what I really desired to do in this world. And started teaching yoga.

Emily: One of the things that I was hoping we could talk a little bit about is the sort of idea of life-work balance and you know, what was life like for you? I guess let's go back to when you were working in finance.

Melini: You know, I was young, so I started working at 21 at Morgan Stanley and you know, working 60 to 80 hours a week was definitely manageable and my life was really work. So I would eat breakfast, lunch and dinner at my desk and maybe I could sneak out for an hour to exercise in the corporate gym or run across the street, you know, to get outside for a moment to work out at Equinox. But it was really six or seven days a week I was working like that. And you know, there were days where I barely saw the sun and I got used to doing that and I was completely happy and fine doing that for years.

Emily: And were you doing yoga when you got out of the building or not even out of the building, but when you got to go to the gym or were you working out and like sort of more traditional setting?

Melini: I was working out more traditionally. I had a trainer, I would pop into the occasional yoga class, but yoga wasn't really a lifestyle or a way of thinking. So I was the person where it was time for Shavasana I would lay there with my eyes open and think it was very strange that people were just closing their eyes and taking a five minute nap together.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>

³ <https://www.melinijesudason.com/>

Emily: Okay. So when did like the lightning bolt hit and you realize that you needed to change things?

Melini: You know, I went and got a grad degree and I was sitting in the park, I think it was my 25th birthday. So I still in business school and people go to business school to really find themselves and you know, think that they're going to shift or transition their life into something more meaningful. But you don't realize that recruiting starts a month after you get to school. So right away you're already planning for the next year and you don't really have time to think. So I knew I desired change at that point. But you know, recruiting so competitive that I just sort of got swept along. Then ended up back at Morgan Stanley. I knew that something needed to change, but it was a couple of years after I realized that where I actually made a move and left my job. It was 2008 and it was the recession. You know, people really weren't going to get compensated well for a number of years and of course compensated well as relative. People were still making a lot of money compared to, you know, a yoga teacher. But at that point, since I wasn't so passionate about what I was doing, I decided to just take a package and leave. And I took a couple of years off where I was skiing, relaxing and people told me, you know, after three months you'll definitely get bored and go back to work again. But that really didn't happen.

Emily: So tell me about that. I mean, I feel like just pause in that moment for a second because I feel like what's really interesting is that I think so often, especially in people's twenties right? Like sometimes you're, you think you're on this path. It seems like everything's working out the way you had wanted it to, but then you kind of have this realization that like it's not actually all it's cracked up to be or you're not as fulfilled as you were. And it sounds like you were enjoying yourself and everything was going well, but that there was something in the back of your head that made you realize like, wait, there might be more to life. And I love that idea of like people saying to you like, Oh, a perma vacation is going to get really boring. And you're like, nah, not really. Like I kind of dig this. I mean, do you think you were kind of burnt out and it just happened to be like a the right time for you to take a package because you were kind of feeling fried anyway?

Melini: I definitely could have stayed in my job longer, but I wasn't inspired. Especially, this might sound terrible, but looking ahead at the path, the women at the top were not who I wanted to be as a person. So I knew to be very successful, my best case scenario was to end up in these positions. For example, like the CFO of the firm or the head of the group.

Emily: And what was it about them that you wasn't what you were looking to be?

Melini: Well, the job requires you to be a certain way, like to be very hard and you know, have this outer shell that's very tough so that you can take on what people are saying. Because even the way people speak, people are swearing all the time. People get angry, you know, you have to be a certain way to function like that and function with that and succeed in that environment. And that's really not who I am as a person. So even though intellectually I could do the job, the kind of personality traits that it was bringing out in me were not the best.

Emily: Well, and that makes it sound like you are already pretty self aware. I mean like that's a big realization.

Melini: Well, yeah, I was the person who, you know, I had an internal office so I had no sunlight. So I had a little aromatherapy diffuser and some crystals at my desk and on Friday in the conference room it was beer and pizza time. I would go charge my crystals. So I was definitely not a normal person in the office. In the office, I was like a little bit weird. But you know, compared to where I am today, I was very early. Like now I'm really far out on the weirdness scale I would say. Or you know, being a yoga-y person.

Emily: Yeah. But I mean I feel like that's interesting, right? Because it also allows you to have that kind of self awareness that allowed you to transition out of that life, which you recognized as one that wasn't going to be happy.

Melini: Yeah. You know, I recognize that I could do it, but I wasn't happy. And what's the point? I was climbing up this ladder and the ladder was leaning against the wrong building. I got to the point where I was like, why am I even doing this? Just to make other people happy or because it sounds good. It wasn't really authentic to me. So I just left.

Emily: So talk to me a little bit. Where are you skiing? What's that like?

Melini: I was really lucky. I had all these miles saved up on American Express, so I'd fly to Aspen and I'm a friendly person. I made a bunch of friends there so I would fly there, you know, a week or two a month and I would still teach a little bit in New York and in the winter time I would, you know, go hang out and ski and be in nature and be around a completely different set of people. People who just, you know, were motivated by, you know, being in the outdoors and feeling connected to nature and this whole different thing that you don't get when you're sitting in an office.

Emily: And so when you say you'd go back and teach, were you teaching yoga at that point?

Melini: I was taking yoga. I was teaching yoga. I already been certified, you know, some time had gone by, this is, you know, 2009, 2010 so I was certified at that point. So, you know, but when you're first starting off, you're not teaching, you know, 20 classes a week because you have to slowly sort of work your way up the ladder and subclasses and you know, that takes a while too. So before my yoga career had really launched, I had a whole bunch of extra time and thankfully money saved up.

Melini: Yeah. No, that's great. And I mean, I feel like living in the city too is expensive and pretty opposite from connecting to nature. So like you're really kind of leading like two different lives at this stage it seems like

Melini: Mhmm. You know, there's a lot of people from New York who liked to winter and Aspen, so I was still connected to people I used to work with at Morgan Stanley, but making a whole different set of friends.

Emily: Yeah, okay, but you didn't decide to jump ship and just like move to Aspen or move someplace like out of the city?

Melini: No, I mean, I'm a New Yorker at heart. I've lived here for 19 years at this point. So, you know, it's nice to have the freedom to leave, but it's almost like when the plane flies into LaGuardia or Kennedy, you can see the whole skyline and you know, then you, you feel in your heart that you definitely belong here, or I do at least.

Emily: Now, that was about 10 years ago. So try to bring us up to the present and let us know how this has all evolved for you.

Melini: I really went through the whole yoga teacher sort of path. You know, first you're starting off and you're auditioning to teach classes and running around working at different gyms and you know, you're getting paid by the hours, so you're trying to teach as much as possible and stacking maybe three classes a day or even four or five or six classes a day. So there's a lot of rushing around. It's great. It's exhausting, you know, not just physically exhausting running around, but also energetically exhausting because you're, you're always speaking to large groups of people and moving around. But if you love what you do, then you're naturally fueled by the energy of the people around you. And you can, you can walk into a room tired, but then you see everybody so eager to learn and that gives you energy to show up for everybody else as well as yourself.

Emily: And does that feel different than the finance work? Like is there a way for you to compare those experiences for us?

Melini: You know, another thing that I didn't mention before is that for my age, I just turned 40 last week.

Emily: Happy birthday.

Melini: Thank you. So for my age, I sound very young and today look very young and it was very difficult for, you know, middle aged white management person to take advice from me even though it could be the same advice, you know, it wasn't going to be received well. And for me to recognize that I could fight it or be angry about it or I could naturally shift to something where looking very youthful and sounding youthful is a positive and draws people to you.

Emily: That sucks. I mean, I feel like that's really, that's not fair. And like, I do think, you know, we all want to change that because the other part of that that we haven't really talked about is that there is a massive difference in the amount of money that you can make. Right? And so

making a shift like that isn't, you know, you're, you're valuing your quality of life, let's say like in your self-respect and all of these things over financial gain, which I think is huge because obviously that has health benefits and long-term you're happier. But I think in the world we live in today, money is such a driver for people in terms of measuring success and self worth and all of these things that I would love to like, you know, just sort of sit with that for a minute because I think that's a, that's a really important lesson for all of us. Especially like, I mean, anybody who's listening who's sort of like thinking about this kind of a change. And I think your self awareness of the idea that you really like, you didn't feel like you were going to be valued for these sort of superficial things, not because of your intellect or something else, but that that wasn't a fight you wanted to have, is how a lot of women feel.

Melini: Just to take one step back. I would say definitely the average amount of money that you make and even at the top, you know, it's difficult to be a yoga billionaire the way you could be a hedge fund billionaire, but you can make a comfortable living teaching yoga. And I think I didn't recognize that at the very beginning when you are running around and teaching classes and getting paid by the hour, it's difficult. But you know, I did go to business school so I thought about different lines of revenue that I needed to create for myself. So the business aspect definitely came into my mind as I was thinking about my yoga career and something that was sustainable to me. Because, you know, there was a time of transition. But I do live comfortably now. I have, you know, private clients and I teach at events and I teach online content.

Melini: So there's many different ways. And even through Instagram to bring revenue in. And I think the ultimate thing is that if you're creating value for people, no matter what you're doing, whether you're, you know, like Marie Kondo, like telling people how to organize their closet, like whatever you choose to do, you can, and this is going to sound, this is part of the yoga. You can, you know, money's just energy. You can draw that in. If you are providing value for people in the world and people see that you're authentic, they connect with that, then no matter what you're doing, you can create value and draw in the money to support yourself.

Emily: And so did you know that when you started, like, did you feel like you had that sense of control or, or power or, I guess self confidence in a way that you were going to figure this out? I mean, I think having an MBA from a great school like obviously sets you up in a way where like you have that framework and you know, you understand markets.

Melini: I did not know. I did not know. It's almost, you know, when you show up at a job and you're collecting a paycheck every two weeks, no matter how busy or how light your workload is, it's very easy and comfortable. And then, you know, if you stay at this job for a certain number of years, like slowly your income increases. And that's easy. Figuring things out and starting over or being an entrepreneur or managing yourself as a brand is, you know, something completely different. And when I first began, I didn't know where it would lead. I didn't know how long I would do this for or if I would really survive or create a career for myself doing this. You know, I did not have a grand master plan and people would ask me from school like, Oh, how

are you going to dominate yoga? Are you going to start your own studio? You know, the typical finance people questions.

Emily: Business school.

Melini: And I was like, no, I just love doing what I do. You know, I'm just teaching class. And then slowly over time it grew and it built. And even doing the practice and living the yoga shifted my mindset to feeling more empowered for myself where it's like, oh, I don't have to rely on a man. I can support myself and make money and you know, create a life for myself and own an apartment and renovate it and pay for everything and pay for my own food. And I don't need someone to take me on vacation. I can take myself on me like everything that I desired to do in my life, I can provide for myself, but you know, you just have to figure out how.

Emily: Next we're going to talk to an expert on pivoting and on working moms and on women getting into positions in the government. She is a fantastic speaker. She's an author and she's going to give us some really tangible, tangible advice that I applied immediately after talking to her.

Wendy Sachs: I'm [Wendy Sachs](#)⁴ and I sort of call myself a modern multihyphenate. I'm an author, speaker, filmmaker, director, media guru. I've worn a lot of different hats. I'm a former Capitol Hill press secretary. My worked in television news for a long time and now I'm, for the past two and a half years I've been directing and producing a feature documentary film called "[Surge](#)"⁵ about the record number of first time female candidates who ran for office in the 2018 midterm elections.

Emily: So we're so excited to have you here because I feel like they're, you have done so many really awesome and interesting things and we could probably talk to you in a number of different episodes, but we're going to try and focus this on this idea of sort of women pivoting and careers. And this is something that I feel very strongly about personally because I feel like as a journalist you know, people sort of get what you do as a reporter, right? But then I've launched a couple of startup businesses and I've left journalism for years to do those things and then kind of miss journalism and come back. Friends of mine would always sort of say like, Em, when you're at a party you should like introduce yourself as like the CEO of this company. And I'm like, but I always introduce myself as I used to be a reporter because I think it's in my DNA. And they're like, you know, that's not like your most successful position. And I'm like, I don't care. It's like it's in my blood. But I think it's also one of these things that I have learned both in a positive way and also really negatively experienced that people really want to put you in a box, right?

Wendy Sachs: Yes, yes to that.

⁴ <http://wendysachs.com/>

⁵ <https://www.surgethemovie.com/>

Emily: And it's so hard for people to understand that you can be both a business lady and a lady reporter. Right. So I'd love to just sort of hear from you. I feel like going from Capitol Hill to the media is not like a crazy pivot, right? But then to go sort of back and forth between business and journalism is something, and I think a lot of people don't understand how difficult that is to do in terms of like maintaining conflict of interest. But also just sort of, I don't think, I think the skill set is probably quite similar, but the public perception is not.

Wendy Sachs: Everything you're saying I completely relate to. Especially the putting you in a box. People really want to see like what are you, and you go to a party and people say, so what do you do? You know, and sort of depending on the moment and depending on the audience, you know, I might actually change what it is that I'm doing, who I am, which can feel sort of an authentic and strange and like some sort of like [imposter syndrome](#)⁶ situation. But you know, it is hard. So I have pivoted so many times in my career and you know, I know that's what you want to talk about in the book that I wrote a couple of years ago. It's called "Fearless and Free: How Smart Women Pivot and Relaunch Their Careers." And the impetus for writing that book was that I had gotten fired. You know, I'd been fired a few times and I was really panicking really about what I was going to do next. I was, you know, over 40 and I had always been in media industries or marketing. I never called myself a marketer, but that's sort of the, that is actually what now so many of the things that I do actually fits into and that's where the jobs are. But I'm not a marketer and I didn't go to school for marketing. I went to school for journalism and yet the language has even changed. So I was trying to like adopt to this new language. But you know, the impetus for writing this book was my own personal journey of getting fired and then scrambling to find a new job. And realizing that everyone I was interviewing with was, you know, they were in preschool when I was in college and then I was so over qualified for all of these because I'd had this breadth of experience and yet they were hiring for like a social media manager, you know, and I couldn't get that job because I didn't have social direct social media manager experience and yet I had done all of these other things and won awards and you know, have this like incredible resume or I thought it was so incredible and impressive, but yet no one could figure out what to do with all of that. And with me and I realized I needed to connect the dots for people. I needed to come up with my through line of my story and simplify it and crystallize it for someone so I could fit into that box in their mind.

Emily: Okay. So tell me about that process. Like what kinds of questions did you ask yourself in order to figure out what your, you know, one line story is?

Wendy Sachs: Well, it started with why am I not getting jobs that I'm overqualified for? It really started with this sort of big existential question of how can it possibly be that I am so overqualified for these jobs and I have clearly have this skillset. But what I realized was that I was interviewing with people and I, and this is not to diminish the talent or the skills or the qualifications of people who, you know, our millennials are a lot younger than I am and you know, they can obviously do their job, but they weren't able to sort of jump into my own brain

⁶ <https://www.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/IJBS/article/view/521>

and figure out all these skills that I have. They knew that they were hiring for something specific and therefore they were looking for, you know, the bullet points. Had you, you know, do you have three to five years experience in this one, you know, position or two years experience. Even at this point since you know, people are going through their jobs so quickly. So I had to really think about, well what is it that I do? Right. So like what you were saying before, you're an entrepreneur, you're a business woman, you're a CEO, but really at the heart of it all, you are journalist. So when I really look back to what I've done over my career from Capitol Hill to television news to working at startups but on the content editorial side to PR. I worked in PR for many years. Really what I am as a storyteller. So if I could talk about being a storyteller, which is also language today, which is sort of the accepted acceptable vernacular, this is what people are calling themselves. Back when I was coming through the ranks we said we were writers or reporters or journalists and now everyone's a storyteller. So when I sort of redefined my own skills and almost modernized it to, you know what people can then say, oh yeah, we're really looking for a cheap storyteller. That's what we need right now. And I said, so I'm a storyteller and my sweet spot is really the intersection of women's issues and politics and you know, whatever else I was talking about at the moment. But sort of the intersection of messaging and storytelling but the real expertise on women's issues then it was sort of resonating with people.

Emily: I feel we need to just stick on that for a second cause I think that's such valuable advice for anybody listening. I think the idea that we like tend to over-talk too, right? Cause it's like we haven't simplified what it is that you know, we can identify in ourselves that they're looking for. And I think especially in this age of sort of [algorithmic hiring](#).⁷

Wendy Sachs: Yes.

Emily: Which is probably, you know, sort of spread a little bit into the brains of the hiring people. Right? So the algorithms are looking for specific keywords in your resume or cover letter that are also in the job description. And I bet that there's a little bit of that when you're interviewing with people now more so than in the past where people could sort of say like, oh she's obviously very smart. She has a great range of experience, she could certainly do this job, right? Like now it's like have you done the job already? And if you haven't then there's a big question mark of like, well maybe you're not the right fit. Like people have to be kind of pre-qualified in a way that they didn't use to be because people used to just be trained on the job.

Wendy Sachs: That's right. And you know, people want sort of an easy hire, right? You're looking at these three managers and they're like, we need someone who had, you know, checking off the list of all of the boxes of all the skills and all of the experience. What have they done? And if they don't immediately fit into those boxes, why, why sort of take a leap of faith on that person when you have, you know, 10 other people who are coming through, you know, cause everyone's looking at resumes online now and it's like the black hole of resumes and everything you were saying with the algorithms and the matches and how you're being

⁷ <https://hbr.org/2019/05/all-the-ways-hiring-algorithms-can-introduce-bias>

identified, you need to match up. So I will tell you, and I talk about this when I give a lot of speeches is how many times I've scrubbed my LinkedIn resume and that top summary, I mean over and over and over I've scrubbed that and change it or refreshed it and it made it specific almost to the moment when I'm, you know, looking for jobs or applying for jobs because of course the very first place people are going to look is LinkedIn and you need to match up to the, you know, to the right words because otherwise they're not going to understand why you're, you know, looking to be hired for the particular position.

Emily: So give me an example of that. Like you're looking at you, there's a specific job that you're interested in and you will curtail or edit your LinkedIn profile to match that specific job. Or are we talking more about broader categories of jobs?

Wendy Sachs: I mean it's worked all different ways. I actually changed the category that, you know, when you have to check off the box on LinkedIn of, of what you are right, you're like self-identifying for a while. I think I was under listed under the public relations communications category. Then I switched it to the marketing category because while I still think of myself as really just like sort of a media communications guru or like really an expert in messaging and, and you know, I can, I can pitch the hell out of any story. I'm like the greatest sort of pitcher ever because I can come up with a really interesting angle, but I wasn't looking a job in PR again or going to a PR agency. Really all of these jobs that I was looking for, we're coming, we're coming under the umbrella of a marketing category. That's where I wanted to match up. My other sort of little, you know, trick that I've had, my sort of LinkedIn hack is if you are really exploring, getting hired at, you know, X company you right, or you know, X couple of companies and you start looking to see those people who have those jobs that you really want, look at their LinkedIn profiles, look at the language that they're using in their summaries and try to match up with what they're calling themselves. Now obviously you want to do this, you're not doing this in a way that where you're lying, right, where you're creating this sort of false, you know, avatar, you know, or persona. But knowing and circling back to this idea that our skillsets are, you know, so not malleable, but your skill set, you're able to sort of match up what you're able to do, what your sort of superpowers are. And those can spread across industries and spread across positions. But that might not be so obvious to someone if you haven't held that job previously. Right? So it's about applying, knowing like I have that skill set. I am a great storyteller, I am really good at reframing, you know, a brand, right? Helping that brand speak to an audience. But even this concept of brands, brands always fell under the marketing category, right? Rather sort of a PR communications. But actually what I'd been doing all of these years is branding people, branding organizations, and then selling them, right? Selling them, but in a PR context, in a media context rather than a, you know, a so called marketing context. So it's just looking at your skill set and actually taking sort of a bigger, a bigger picture view of what you're really able to do and then seeing how it's applying to jobs today or applying to jobs that you're looking to get hired for. And then sort of reframing it to fit into what makes sense for hiring manager. So you're making their job easier without being a fraud, right? With just leaning into your own skillset, but making it work for the position that you're actually trying to get hired for. So it's a little bit of some sort of, you know, Ninja LinkedIn skills.

Emily: And most people take things, so literally like you're not copying and pasting somebody else's words exactly into your profile. You're taking like the sense of culture probably, right. Or like you know, other kinds of keywords that the person is using and then you're rephrasing them in your own language. Cause it would be really creepy if you went to like go hire somebody, you realize that they have the same description or something as you on LinkedIn. Right.

Wendy Sachs: Oh okay. Right. No, but it's just seeing, you know, it's very interesting because I do a lot of, I do a lot of talks about female confidence and what women need to do to create confidence and how men just can, you know, look in the mirror and say, Oh I can get that job or I can run for Congress or I can do that. And women say, well I didn't really have all of that experience. What do I know about foreign relations? How can I be a Congress woman? What do I know about X, Y, and Z? I've never done exactly that. Whereas men say, well, you know, I sort of was around that and I know a little bit about this and what I don't know I can learn so therefore I'm going to apply for that job or therefore I'm going to run for public office or you know, therefore I will do it cause I will figure it out. So women are very stuck in this, in this model of I haven't done exactly that. Who am I to think I can do it? Right. So a lot of it is getting out of that mindset and saying, wait a second, I have done all of these different things and therefore it can apply to these other positions or this other industry I want to pivot into. And I talk a lot about this. Two women who took themselves out of the workforce because they were home raising kids and you know, maybe they were, you know, helping out. They were, you know, working on volunteering with their local schools and PTA or religious organizations or community organizations. I'm thinking about actually one friend in particular who I wrote about in one of my books who took seven years off and one of the things she was doing was she was volunteering at [Hippo playground](https://riversideparknyc.org/groups/hippo-playground/)⁸ in New York city to raise money to get more playground equipment. And when she started looking for a job again and people would say to her, what are you most proud of in your career? And she'd had this, you know, a great career before she took her seven years off raising her kids and she said, you know what I'm actually most proud of is all the work I did, raising money for Hippo playground. And she was able to talk about it. And even though it wasn't a paid job, what she was doing was applying similar skillsets to what he was looking to do in this job. She was, you know, that she was interviewing for. And so, you know, it's just again, reframing, like you're really a project manager. If you're working in some sort of volunteer organization, it can be project managing the hippo playground, getting it off the ground and raising money and fundraising and all of these different things. So it's just looking at the work that we're doing, whether it's paid or unpaid, and seeing the potential and seeing how we need to explain it.

Emily: Well and the skills acquired doing that. Right? I mean I think that's such a big deal. So many women that spend a lot of time volunteering are essentially running small businesses, right? But they're not given credit for that. And so I think that this idea of like trying to translate some of that into these are the skills that I have, these are the budgets I've managed. Right? Or

⁸ <https://riversideparknyc.org/groups/hippo-playground/>

like these are the initiatives that raise this much money that I was a part of. Right. That kind of speaking skill to skill makes a lot more sense. And then, you know, maybe you mentioned you didn't get paid for it, maybe you don't.

Wendy Sachs: That's right. A lot of this comes down to our own personal confidence. You know, how we talk about ourselves, how we see ourselves, and then it really becomes about how we sell it, right? Because when it's not obvious to other people when you don't come from, you know, if your title wasn't a project manager before and you're here, you know, applying for a project manager position and you know you can do it, you know you're very organized and you're great at spreadsheets and keeping things on track and you know, you have all of these various experiences that would make you, you know, really fabulous at the job. But if you don't have project manager, how are you going to talk about that? Right. It becomes reframing your own messaging around your previous work, whether it's volunteer or paid or unpaid.

Emily: We did an episode on [working moms](#)⁹ and one of the pieces of advice that [Katherine Goldstein](#)¹⁰, who was a journalist who's written a lot on working moms and done some really interesting research on it, said to us, was that when you go into a job interview, if you are at this stage of life where you have been at home with your kids and doing, you know, maybe lots of volunteer work or different things like do not actually mention that because statistically women are discriminated against on the basis of having been stay at home moms or like being moms in general it sounds like. And I remember saying to her like, that's so hard because, and I think it was hard. I asked her that as a very direct question. Like, do you not say that you're a mom or do you say that you're a mom? And my memory if it's serving me correctly, was that she basically said like, do not say you're a mom in the interview because statistically you will be less likely to get the job. But once you get the job, talk the hell out of being a mom so that we can sort of change that paradigm once you're in there and working. But she was basically saying, I mean she's, a lot of her work has focused on how like, you know, men can take the afternoon off to go golfing, but if a woman, you know, cuts out early to go to our go pick our kids up or go to a school play or something like that, it's viewed very different.

Wendy Sachs: Right. Well, I mean I would definitely push back on some of that. It's very hard. It's the elephant in the room. If you've taken a big chunk of time out of the workforce and you don't mention it. Right. I think what's, what's important is to talk about your previous jobs and how they apply to what you're gunning for right then. You know, like this is what I did when I worked at X company and this is what I can be doing for you too. And to be really knowledgeable on what that company's been doing and to be able to talk about recent developments or press, you know, what you've read in the press or new hires or new products or whatever may be happening right, and how you can apply it. But I would also argue that it is helpful if you can weave in what you've been doing since your last job, especially if it was a long time ago and how that relates to how you can help them in this company, in this position now to

⁹ <https://empoweredhealthshow.com/workforce-mother-career-discrimination/>

¹⁰ <https://www.katherinegoldstein.com/>

not shy from it because then it's like, oh, well she hasn't worked in such a long time. Maybe she's not, you know, in the languages, maybe she's not a great culture fit. Right, if you have young children, so you want to just take that head on. I don't think shying away, I mean you're not going to be talking about you knew your childcare issues if you come to work, but I don't think that there's any problem with addressing, you know, that this is what you've been doing since you last left your last paid job. Especially, you need to, need to make it sort of apply in some way. If it doesn't apply, don't talk about it.

Emily: Right. That's good advice. I also think, you know, my big thing is always since I have two kids and I feel like there's nothing that has made me more efficient, right. And organized and like determined and like all of these things and like having to be responsible for two humans. Right? So like I think in some ways you acquire incredible skills being a mom. Right? But like if you looked up like any sort of, you know, startup operation that's looking for somebody who can manage all of these different things. It's like no one prioritizes like moms, I just don't know anybody who does. Right. Right. So I think that's sort of an interesting like discriminatory factor when really that's like a, it should be an asset, right? That like women will get the work done, they just will because they're used to having to do that. But I just want to change course a little bit because I feel like, you know, it's this time of year too where like people are starting to think like a year ahead, what do I want to do? You know? And maybe starting to think about other careers or opportunities. And I think in school we don't get a huge sort of education on all of the different jobs out there. I feel like one of the most exciting things about being a grownup, especially as a reporter, is getting to talk to so many people who do so many different jobs. Right? So it's not like doctor, lawyer, you know, like there's plenty of really creative, interesting jobs. Do you have any sort of hacks or tips or ways for women to think about things they really enjoy doing or that they're intellectually curious about and how to sort of reverse engineer finding a job that uses those kinds of skills?

Wendy Sachs: Oh, that's such a great question. I mean, I spent a lot of time thinking about that. I really do. You know, it's, again, it's what are you interested in? And then who's doing what you're interested in, how do you get there? So is it then reaching out to people in that field or showing up at some of these mixers or some of these events and you can meet some of these people doing the interesting work that you want to be doing. Can you shadow them? Can you intern for someone? You know, I do tell people that most people don't have time to meet for coffee. You know, like that whole coffee date thing is just really, really hard to get. But sometimes just reaching out with like a short email to someone and saying, what you're doing is really interesting to me. Do you have 10 minutes to get on a phone call with me? I want to hear more about it and how you got to where you are. Those can be helpful. But I am finding that I'm part of a women's list network at literally called the list. And it's a real mashup of women in media and technology, startups and politics and art and film and all these, you know, it's a real cross pollination of so many really interesting women and people who are doing philanthropy and like really saving the world. That's incredible. And through this network, I've just, my eyes have opened to so many interesting jobs and companies that people are starting up and all of these like opportunities that really opened my eyes. And I really, you know, I feel very fortunate

to be part of this network. I would encourage other women to join networks. You know, there are places like, it's not just [the Wing](#)¹¹, which is a coworking space for women, but they're [the Riveter](#)¹² is opening up around the country. There's like a whole bunch of different locations. And [Amy Nelson's](#)¹³ the CEO and founder and she's tremendous and I encourage everyone to follow her online. She's, you know, her Instagram stories are incredible and super inspiring. But there's all these great spaces now where women can join or show up or even if you don't join membership, you can go to events where you can then surround yourself with other women who are doing extraordinary things. It can really help open your eyes to what's out there.

Emily: Yeah, I'm a member at the wing and I feel like it is really profound how much networking happens there. Like it's not bullshit, right? Like people are really saying like, what do you do? How can I help? Like let's work together on this in a way that I've never been involved in anything like that. I mean I went to Smith College undergrad, you'd think it would be like that. But in many ways it wasn't. I mean it is, you know, there's a great, Smith has a wonderful network and I went to Northwestern for grad school. So you and I are probably both in that same network. Yeah. Which is also wonderful and like can be very helpful. But it's a lot of, I mean I think networking is always, the onus is on you. Right. But there is something about being in these all female spaces that aren't so large that feels really, really effective. Yeah. You know, I think that, and I'm probably a lot older than you are, but it was not a thing for women to be helping women. I've always worked in female, you know, largely female industries, you know media and journalism and all of that. It was even dabbled in advertising for a little bit either. There's a lot of women in these jobs, but it never felt like women were trying to lift women along with them. I had a lot of female bosses. No one was raising me along with them. You know, I don't think it was like an aggressive cat bite situation where we were like clawing our way to the top and fighting other women, but it did feel like there was a smaller piece of the pie and it didn't belong to all of us and there, you know, there was like sort of a precious little piece at the top and women weren't saying, I'm going to mentor you and I'm going to support you and I'm going to lift you up with me. That was just, was not part of the, of the gen X generation at all and I really credit millennials for changing the conversation. So now older women too, this whole sponsorship and mentorship and know let's help each other out. I mean I've had amazing conversations. I had [Katie Couric](#)¹⁴ who is an advisor in my film and has helped support my film "Surge." She had a phone call with me. I was sitting in a parking lot making this phone call with her, pitching her on my film and she said to me, what can I do to help you? And I literally wanted to cry. I was like, Katie Couric is asking me how she can help me. It was the most like profound, beautiful, extraordinary moment for me in my career, you know, thinking, wow, this is unbelievable.

Emily: Yeah. And it's not lip service, right?

¹¹ <https://www.the-wing.com/>

¹²

¹³ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/amynelsonriveter/>

¹⁴ <https://katiecouric.com/podcasts/>

Wendy Sachs: It's not lip service. And I think that there's like a new ethos among the sisterhood that we really need to help each other. And when you have someone like a Katie who has had this extraordinary career and you know, she is so admired and to, you know, be able to say to me, how can I help you? What's your ask? You know, that's a really interesting place we're in now to where this, there's this whole like ask and give mentality and networks that are actually codifying the ask and the gift. Like how do you ask for something? And women can be very squeamish asking, right? We don't like to ask for help. I'm very okay with asking for help by the way.

Emily: Good for you. I mean, I think that's great. I'm terrible at asking for help. And I think it's something that I'm really trying to work on because, you know, it's interesting, I'm much more comfortable asking men for help professionally than I am women because I feel like I've had a number of experiences where people have sort of not that directly, as you know, Katie Couric said to you, which would be like a dream moment. But sort of said like, Oh, you know, I'd really like, you know, kind of acted like they wanted to be invested in some way in helping. And then when I did ask or when I tried to make some overture about needing help, I felt like it was repugnant to them. Do you know what I mean? And that experience really turned me off. Whereas with men, I've always felt like you can just be very straight forward. Like, I want that job, right? Like I want that account, I want this story, can I, you know, I want to talk to you about your life. Like, let's get into it. Right? Whereas I always felt like there's way, it's a just a more delicate dance with women and there are plenty of women who would prefer to be the only woman at the table with a bunch of men. And it's hard to know that before you approach them.

Wendy Sachs: I totally know what you're talking about. And there was so much to unpack and all of those things that you just said and as fabulous as it has been for people to say, how can I help you? And for women to be saying that to me, men are not as saying to me, how can I help you? It's become like a female thing. There is so much disappointment at the same time. So like, let be clear, it is not all like rainbows and unicorns when it comes to, you know, the sisterhood and helping and all of that too. And there is some lip service and when I really do ask, it's, you know, it doesn't always work out, let's put it it that way. And yeah, there still is definitely. I feel like there's some, you know, within certain people in certain groups are still, you know, can be a very competitive feeling.

Wendy Sachs: I try not to surround myself with that though. You know, I really tried to not be around those toxic people who feel like they are competing with you or they don't want to help you or it is just, you know, empty lip service. I'd become pretty strategic in who I talk to and you also just know right away whether it's for real or not. This process of making a film has been the hardest thing I've ever done in my entire career. And it's been an incredibly, and I've never made a film before and I've never raised money for a film before and I've never directed a film before and yet I'm the co-director and have, you know, a full length feature film.

Emily: Yay. That's so exciting.

Wendy Sachs: Yay. But it's, you know, it's been a really, really tough journey. I think that one of the other things, and this is like digressing for a second, but about the honesty and transparency that we have with one another, it's really important to keep it real and you know, you can look through you when you look through the lens of social media and you could see all these women are people out there. You know, it doesn't have to just be women, people doing great things and you wonder, well how did that happen? You know, why is that not happening for me? Maybe I'm not good enough. Maybe I'm not smart enough, maybe I'm not capable enough. And you don't really see the journey. You know how challenging some of these things are because people are only showing their highlight reel on social media. But it's really important to have those honest conversations to let people know like it is really hard. It's hard to pivot in your career. It's hard to make a big change. It's hard to feel vulnerable and go out there, but to have a, you know, to be able to talk to people who say, no, no, I know I've been there and this is what I did and this is how it can suck and this is how it can be great. You know, and this is, this is my experience.

Emily: This week's episode is a reminder to me that we all have so many skills and interests and that feeling like somebody puts you in a box might be also like sort of the reverse way to look at that would be you also feel like you're in a box that you don't know how to get out of. Right. So we talked a little bit about this, but I think you know, sitting down and kind of listing skill sets that you have and skill sets that you don't have that you'd like to develop or things that you're really interested in versus things you're not interested in. I mean, I often say on this podcast that it's just as important to know what you're not good at it as it is to know what you are good at and trying to figure out are those things you want to work on? Are there things that you want a job that doesn't involve that? I think we're all grown up enough to be able to make those decisions for ourselves. This episode me really reminded me that like women can do whatever they put their minds to as long as they feel confident enough to go forth and be proud of the work they've done and be willing to learn more about the things that they don't know yet. I'm Emily Kumler and that was Empowered Health. Thanks for joining us. Don't forget to check out our website at empoweredhealthshow.com for all the show notes, links to everything that was mentioned in the episode as well as a chance to sign up for our newsletter and get some extra fun tidbits. See you next week.