



Karl: Hello this is Karl of Fear to Fuel, and right now we have Gretchen Rubin of The Happiness Project. She started a website based around happiness. It's Happiness-Project.com and she also created a book out of it and it's a New York Times bestseller. Welcome Gretchen.

Gretchen: Thanks for having me.

Karl: Sure, sure, Gretchen and I met at 2009's South by South West and one of my favorite things about you when we talked – your blog was way more popular than mine, but you were asking me more questions than I could ask you. What's your method behind all this questioning and wanting to be happier?

Gretchen: I guess I just became very struck with the idea that sometimes the thing that you think is the most important, like I thought oh the most important thing in my life is to be happy or that's what I want more than anything, but I didn't spend any time thinking about it directly. And so I became more and more of the view that I needed to – if I cared about something I should think about it a lot and study it and really figure out what I wanted to do, and instead of just sort of going along in my routine or whatever. So I'm really trying to stop and think a lot more about the decisions that I'm making and the choices that I'm making.

Karl: Good, so you started off you went to law school and you clerked for a Supreme Court judge, which is very prestigious, and then you decided that you didn't want to do this and you wanted to switch careers. Can you kind of walk us through your thought process?

Gretchen: I was having a great time as a lawyer, I had a really great – clerking for Justice O'Connor was really fantastic, but at the same time I was working on what I didn't really acknowledge to myself was a book, that I was basically working on a book in my free time and with a project that later became my book called Power Money Fame Sex: A User's Guide, and I think what happened to me is a little bit different than what happens to a lot of lawyers. I know a lot of lawyers that maybe aren't enjoying law that much, but they don't know what they want to do instead. And I was fortunate in that I really became aware of what I wanted to do, and I think this idea of fear is very important because if I look back in my history there were many, many indications that I really wanted to be a writer. I had written books before. I have novels, I'm not a good novelist, but I've written a couple of novels, I take tons of notes, I read constantly, my sister's a professional writer, she's a TV writer – there were a lot

of things when I look back – and I was writing a book in my free time so that’s a huge clue right there.

And so I think – but I didn’t really acknowledge it to myself and I think one of the reasons that I didn’t was because I was sort of afraid of facing up to this idea and admitting to myself that that’s what I wanted. Law is very structured, it’s very predictable it’s very clear what you have to do to succeed, and I felt like with writing I didn’t really know how to go about it, or what to do, I didn’t feel like I knew kind of the steps that I needed to go through. But there came a point where the desire to become a writer became so strong that it really became irresistible to me and I really did admit to myself that that’s what I wanted, and there was a moment where I really said to myself – my husband and I were moving back from Washington to New York and I was like what am I waiting for? I mean I was moving from Washington to New York, which is like the publishing capital of the United States, I have an idea for a book, I’m already writing it, my path is clear if I want to. This is the point where I said I don’t have a job right now, I have this opening, and I started to think well this is the time to do it and so I made the switch. Interestingly, he made a switch too; he was a lawyer as well and he switched into finance.

Karl: Your husband.

Gretchen: Yeah, so we both switched and there came a day when we were like are we going to keep paying our bar fees? And my husband was like no we’re not and we just switched; we both switched then and we never switched back.

Karl: Wow and that takes a lot of guts. What you talked about was you wrote, you read, you were immersed in reading and books and blogs and writing, and that’s where you discovered this passion for writing, and I think there’s a lot of people out there – there’s a lot of people that are doing great stuff, they’re artists, they’re musicians, but they don’t think they can make it a career. How did you feel like this could be something you could make money from?

Gretchen: Well this is about ten or 12 years ago now, and so I would say that the publishing environment has changed quite a bit and I think it’s harder now. In some ways it’s easier actually and some ways it’s harder. I felt that for me the big thing for me was can I get an agent, and I still think that’s true. It’s harder to get an agent – once you get an agent the agent will help you get published. I just decided I was going to give it a try, and I just felt that if I could get an agent and we could sell it then I could become a professional writer and I was able to do that. Now I was very fortunate because my husband had a job where we weren’t dependant on my salary, so I really had a luxury which a lot of people don’t have, which is that I wasn’t solely supporting myself

or my family with what I was making. So when I made this change I was really in a very fortunate condition in that if I didn't sell it it wouldn't have been a disaster. If I hadn't been able to get an agent or I hadn't been able to sell the book, and in fact there was a point where I said to myself I would write it for free; if they would publish it I will write it for free, I want so badly for this to be published that I would do it for nothing. And in fact that's like with a blog - you do the blog for free because you just love it.

But, figuring out how to make your passion into your profession is really a huge challenge. I spent a lot of time, every since I made that change, I spent a lot of time studying kind of the commercial side of it which is how to publishers make money, how does the business model work, what's working and what's not working, what's working and what's not working, what's selling and what's not selling, how do book stores work, like how does that side of it work? Because I feel like if you really do want to do it professionally you really have to understand that part of it. I love the writing part of it and the thinking part of it, but I feel like it's my obligation to understand the business of it because I want it to be my profession and so I feel like I need to understand that side of it too.

Karl: Do you have different income streams? I know with your blog you don't monetize your blog; do you monetize your writing in other ways besides novels and books?

Gretchen: Well I've been able to do well with my books, which is not always the case in terms of advances and all that kind of thing, and I do some other kinds of writing and then I have some other potential things that I'm too superstitious to talk about that soon will also be supplements, not quite yet so I can't really talk about that, but yeah it's one of the things that I think about a lot. What are the other kinds of things you can do?

Karl: Expanding.

Gretchen: Yeah, how can you expand what you're doing, yeah.

Karl: So you've made the leap, you're a professional writer, and your book is fantastic by the way.

Gretchen: Oh thank you.

Karl: If you check out The Happiness Project blog check out her book because it's way different, it's a story from month to month and what Gretchen goes through. I love the stories within it and you talk a lot about your children. How

do you balance your career and your children and kind of the work life where you find that harmony?

Gretchen: Well I feel really lucky as a writer because I feel like it's the easiest kind of job to do full-time because it's so flexible. I do work a full day; I work 8:30 to 6:00, and so I work a full day and in that time I also go to the gym, and have meetings, and all that stuff, but that's by day. But if I wanted to pick up from school or my daughter is sick and I need to take her to the pediatricians or all these things, it's much, much easier for me than it is for most people that are working because really it's almost always my time is my own and I don't have to be in a certain place, I don't have to meet certain people, I don't have to be dressed a certain way, and so I have this huge amount of flexibility. Now that being said, one of the things about being that is that you have to have a lot of discipline because you can't stick it to the man. If something doesn't get done today it has to get done tomorrow and there's no blowing it off, there's nobody covering for me, there's nobody giving me a paid vacation because everybody's like well, you have to hand it in September 2011 and whatever it takes to get it done you just have to get it done.

So in a way I feel this constant pressure because there's sort of no off time. I could always be working or not working. Now for me it's not so hard because I love to work. I basically have set this whole thing up so I just do what I love to do all the time, so I don't find that too difficult but I know other writers who find that very hard to manage because there's this looseness for time which for some people is a challenge for their productivity. But for me, I feel like it really has been great in terms of feeling like I can do what I want to do as a parent in terms of showing up for the birthday cupcakes at school or whatever and then also feel like I'm really working very, very hard.

Karl: That's a good point. I think the people that are listening – they're creative, they want to do something that's straight from their heart, something that they love to do, and it's finding those systems that make them productive and still make them happy. Can you give us a tip? What's one thing that you stay self-disciplined and you can stay focused on your work but still be able to do the other stuff too?

Gretchen: Well one I think is really key for writers, and also I have a friend who's a painter and he says the same thing about himself, which is that you should work every day. Every day you should enter into your project, even if it's only for five or ten minutes, but what happens to a lot of people is – especially if they're not working on something full-time is that the days go by and you kind of get distanced from something, even if it's a project that you love and it's kind of hard to get back into it and so you then delay and delay and there's

sort of this friction that develops. And also, you kind of have to get back into your mindset and that takes time and energy, and it sort of slows you down and it makes it less easy to just go into it. If you work every day, you're sort of always in it; you're always thinking about it. I think it really stimulates your creativity and also it keeps you working. You don't have to make up that lost ground or remind yourself where you've been, and so my friend who's a painter is actually married to a novelist and what they say to each other is I can work for ten minutes, meaning that I'm so inside my project that I can sit down and in ten minutes I can get something done because I'm right there; I know exactly what I'm going to do and I can just do it and then get up and walk away, because sometimes if – kind of a *** project you kind of need a couple of hours to get back into your mind set, remember what you were up to, and then get started again. And so then I think it's harder and harder to go in and out. So even on a weekend or whatever just to have a little something that you do, even if it's just reading something, or just re-reading your notes, or just opening up a document and just looking at it. I think that that really helps.

Karl: That's a great idea, and I think that's what helped me take my small itty bus to the next level, is before I would just kind of write a blog post every couple of days and I'd be away from it, but I don't post as often as you do, but what I do is I'm reading, I'm guest posting for other blogs, I'm doing coaching calls, and it keeps me very focused and you're right, that creativity kind of blossoms because every morning you almost have some sort of oh I could do this.

Gretchen: Yeah it's also like in the forefront of your mind so you're making connections and you're thinking about things and then the further you get away from it I think – because I used to, especially when I started blogging and I was going to write every day, I'd never done that kind of writing before, I'd never been a journalist and I had always written these book length projects and I thought well I'm just going to run out of things to say. But I feel like the more you do it the more ideas you have and it sounds like you have to same thing. It's like you're doing this, you're doing that, and then you're like oh I can do this other thing too and then you run out of time is more of the problem than running out of the ideas. So I think it's not like it always has to be the same work, but just that you're in that place in your mind.

Karl: Yeah that's a great point. One of the things, this whole thing revolves around fear, now that you're in it I've talked to people and they talk about sustaining this career and the fear behind that. What's your biggest fear with your career?

Gretchen: I don't know, that's an interesting question. I don't worry about the future that much in that way. I guess my biggest fear – I hate deadlines. I really, really hate deadlines and in one way I think I'm not a journalist because I hate deadlines so much. So I think for me a fear would come if like something happened where I had to get something done very fast; I would panic. I need to have a lot of time. When I have a lot of time I get things done early, but if I have very little time I feel paralyzed and frantic. So that is one thing I worry about, is managing it so I don't feel time pressure.

Karl: That's funny that you say that because some of the other people that I've talked to, they need that pressure to get stuff done.

Gretchen: No, and you really need to know yourself in this way. I have a friend who's a novelist and she can only work when she has a deadline and she said she begged her editor – she said I only work when I have a deadline; pretend, lie to me, tell me that I have deadlines, that's the only way I can get myself to work please. And her editor, I think very foolishly was like no, no take all the time you need. But my friend really needed those deadlines and I think you kind of need to know yourself. If you need those deadlines then you need to give yourself fake deadlines to keep yourself going, and then if you're sort of like me then you need to manage yourself so that you don't feel the pressure of having a looming deadline. But you're absolutely right – I think more people need deadlines. I think my kind of person is in the minority and that more people work to have deadlines. The one thing I would say about deadlines though is that one of the things about creativity is that it kind of comes in layers. And a lot of times you'll do something and then weeks later you'll think of some other cool idea or you'll think of some twist or some deeper thing will come into it. And if you're always crunched up against a tight deadline you're not going to give yourself time for that process. So I think it's good to maybe give yourself fake deadlines so that then you can maybe have a little extra time to do that if you can. But some people just work against a deadline; that's really true.

Karl: I like what you talked about – that reflection process. Do you think it's accessing your subconscious?

Gretchen: I don't know that it's accessing your subconscious or just that more ideas come to you. Like if I can with a blog post I'll write it and then I'll wait like six or eight hours before I post it and see if anything else comes to my mind because a lot of times it's just – as you think sometime over other ideas come to you or you just have a deeper, and maybe that's coming from your subconscious or maybe it's just how many ideas you can handle at one time or as you reflect on something your ideas get bigger. But I definitely feel that's

true for me, and actually when I write a book one of the things that is sort of an issue for me is I can't write a book – like I can't give a chapter to my editor or like the first third of my book to my editor because I write the whole thing all at once. I'll write the whole first draft and it will be kind of extremely rough, and then I just go over it, and over it, and over it and kind of layer it, and layer it, and layer it from beginning to end so that by the time the first chapter is done the last chapter is done. So everything is done together, which is kind of a disadvantage, if my editor would ever say wow you really need to make a major change here the whole book would already be done. But that's the way I work, is just sort of going over it, and over it, and over it because I do start to have more ideas and to think about how to present ideas more clearly or more forcefully as I reflect on them over time.

Karl: I'm curious, for me, I'm not the type of person that likes to go over and over, I like to jump to new things, but I realize as a writer I need to do more of that and I need to enjoy more of that because that's when my work gets refined and that's when more people connect with it. How do you enjoy that process; that editing process?

Gretchen: See I love to edit. I don't like to write it the first time; the editing is the part that I like.

Karl: How do you connect with that part of yourself? Do you tell yourself I'm going to make this perfect, or I'm going to make this so – do you know what I mean; how do you find a way to enjoy it?

Gretchen: You know what I do is I do it through note taking. I read a huge amount and as I read I take notes and I have these massive, massive documents of notes that are arranged in this way that only makes sense to me. And that's how I go about things and I'll just take the notes and I'll go over my notes, and then I'll think about how my notes fit into what I'm working on or I'll think about something that somebody else said and it will give me a new idea. A lot of times when I take a note I'll have a page and then there will just be one word circled, like I was just taking notes and the word that was circled was background, and I'm like what was I thinking when I circled that word background; why did I think that that was an important word to think about? So then I sort of stop there and thought about it. So for me that's what works. It's sort of how I react to what other people have written – that gives me ideas that I rip off of. So that's what I do and it's hugely time consuming to take notes, but that's how I do it; that's what works for me.

Karl: So that's how you start to process exactly what you want to write. That's interesting.

Gretchen: Yeah, yeah, so I have just tons of books and I have a whole kind of hierarchy of writing is the most – if I’m the freshest I write. If I’m less fresh I take notes. If I’m less fresh I read and mark what I’m going to take notes on. So that’s my hierarchy of mental difficulty in my day.

Karl: Now when you created a lot of these systems did you do it out of what makes you feel most energized, because that’s kind of what I’m feeling.

Gretchen: You know I have to say, I have to admit, basically with all of my projects I’m like what do I feel like doing, just for myself for fun, and so how would I create a writing project that would make this into my job essentially. So when I was like I want to do a happiness project for myself and I started it and I’m doing all this thinking and making the plans, I was like hey wait a minute, I could write this as a book and this will be my job. I was always absolutely obsessed with Winston Churchill, I was reading every book I could read about Winston Churchill, and I was like hey wait a minute, I want to write a biography book and then that will be my job. And so for me that is – I think what is something I would do for fun, what do I feel like doing, and then how do I turn that. And I feel incredibly lucky that I’ve been able to build that and to make that what I do, like incredibly lucky.

Karl: I love that. So you’re basically following your love.

Gretchen: Absolutely 100 percent, I mean all of my books I just loved writing every one of them so much because it was just like what did I just really feel like doing. And you know I’ll say, like many people think that this is my first book and I’m like oh no, no, no this is my fifth book because my other books maybe you haven’t heard of. People always assume that it comes very easily, when it seems like it came easily, but I wrote many books that I thought were great but that did not find audiences to the same degree. And my blog, I’ve been having my blog for four and-a-half years and so it was a very gradual process, but I just had a lot of time. So sometimes when you’re doing this you have to admit that it may take time; you may not hit it out of the park the first time or you might not be able to quit your day job and do something full-time and that’s okay. You just have to think about how would you figure out how to do that.

Karl: I like that, and one of the things in your book I love, there’s a quote – enthusiasm is more important to mastery than an innate ability because the single most important element in developing expertise is practice.

Gretchen: Yes.

Karl: Better off pursuing a profession that comes easily and you love because you are more eager to practice in a competitive environment.

Gretchen: I really think that's true. I mean I just think if you really like what you do in the end you're going to do a better job because you can only force yourself to do something for so long before it really, really starts getting hard – to just stick with it. This was one of the things I saw as a lawyer. When I was clerking at the supreme court, I mean these are people who are really, really, really at the top of their game and most of them love law and that's why they're there, and I noticed that there was a difference between me and the other people. They wanted to talk about cases at lunch and they were reading law reviews on the weekends for fun, and they would just sit around and talk about cases and they would sit around and talk about legal principles and they would sit around and talk about different justice's theories of jury screens and I was like you know what – these people really love it, and I'm doing it and I'm enjoying it, I'm getting a lot out of it, I'm really glad I'm here, but I am not the same as they are. They are more energized by it; they are completely energized and they're doing it for fun, it's what they love. I'm doing this because it's a really good job.

Karl: And that's when you knew you needed to make the switch.

Gretchen: Yeah, and I had this weird epiphany where I was over at a friend's house choosing education graduate school and she had all these boring looking text books lying around, I thought they were boring, and I said to her oh is this the kind of thing you have to read for your program and she said oh yeah but that's the kind of thing I read on my own anyway. And I thought that's what I want. I want to be doing the same thing for fun as I would be doing for my job, at least I want to try; I want to try to pull that off. I had a great job as a lawyer, I had a great experience as a lawyer, I'm so glad that I did it, but for me just the urge to try to be a writer just became irresistible.

Karl: Yeah one of the – there's so many tips in that book that I love and you come back to, for me, you talk about the one sentence journal. Well you talk about a journal in the book, but you talk about later actually at South by South West you talk about creating a one sentence journal. What I've been doing is I've been using that for my career, and it has helped guide me through my emotional pitfalls so that I don't keep falling in them again. Do you find that you use that in the same way?

Gretchen: I use mine more like a day in the life. It's sort of like what's happening today, but I've heard of people doing it for that. A friend of mine

who was starting a small business did it in that way. I had somebody who was going through chemo who did kind of a diary of chemo. A lot of people do it about their family life. So I think it's great for anything that you kind of want to memorialize, that you want to reflect on. I had somebody say to me the thing about keeping a journal, if you keep a journal for years you realize you keep having the same epiphanies over and over again, and I think there's a lot to that. By keeping a journal you kind of remind yourself of what you've learned, or like for you you might say wow, remember six months ago I felt exactly the same way and it all turned out fine, so this is just a phase; I'll get through it or whatever, so you have this feeling of learning from the past.

Karl: And not repeating – like I noticed I would get frustrated with certain articles that I was writing and then I would jot that down in my one sentence journal and then I would keep letting it happen to me like a couple times of month, and then I was like what am I doing? I keep repeating the same mistake and I'm beating myself up over something that I can't stop, so I realized that I just need to be more playful with it.

Gretchen: Right, right, perfect too; that's a great example of how you can learn from your own experience more easily when you have that record of it.

Karl: Yeah, one thing that's very important as a writer in your book you talk about the different networking groups that you're a part of. How do you use that to boost your career?

Gretchen: One of the things about being a lawyer is that you don't ever see anybody else, or at least the kind of writing I am where I don't go into a news room or something like that, and so I felt I wanted to be part of a writer community partly because that's what I love and so I wanted to talk shop; I wanted to sit around with a bunch of people and just have water cooler conversation about all the different aspects of being a writer and writing, and then I also knew that it would be helpful for me if I had people I could turn to for advice or whatever. But, it was tricky to figure out how to do that because writers – it took me a while to figure out how to tap into that, but I will say that all the resolutions that I tried in The Happiness Project, one of the ones that was the most effective for building happiness in my life in a major way was the idea of joining or starting a group because I joined or started like almost a dozen groups and many of them are focused around writing or books and they are such engines of happiness for me because I feel more supported, I feel more connected to the things that I love, I get a chance to talk about the things that I love, I have more information, so I think it's been great. And these are groups that – it's not like they're workshops. We don't trade writing and

criticize each other's writing, it's more like we talk about writing or talk about issues that come up for us. And that's just super helpful to have that.

Karl: So you're building friendships from these.

Gretchen: Yeah no huge, huge, huge, huge, yeah and you know some of the groups I started so then it's exciting to feel like you're making friends and you're helping other people make friends too so that's fun; it's really, really fun.

Karl: So you don't look at it as a typical – a lot of people say networking I give you something, you give me something type of thing. A lot of times you go to chamber of commences and that's kind of that icky feeling, so you do more of kind of just creating friendships out of it and letting it kind of roll where it may.

Gretchen: Yeah, yeah, no that's the way that it's worked better for me because I think it can be very intimidating to do sort of a social networking. I've never really figured out exactly how to do it; I'm not very good at that.

Karl: Oh I'm terrible at that.

Gretchen: I think most people feel they are. So it's easier if you're formed around some passion and then you all have something to talk about and then the networking arises from it naturally. But one of the things that I will say about social media and about networking is one thing that I hear from writers a lot and from people a lot is they say something about Twitter like oh, Twitter is great and they say the thing about it is I don't want to talk about myself all the time, I don't like self-promoting, I'm not that interesting, and I feel like I don't like it when people are talking about me, me, me and I'm not going to do it. And my answer to them is that is not a good way to use Twitter; you should not be doing that and people who are using it that way are not using it well. Use it as a spotlight for other people. Talk about other things that you think that are good. Talk about articles that are good, or books that you read that you've loved, or movies that you've seen that you loved, or interesting facts that you've picked up. Use it as a way to direct attention at other people because it's good karma and then people will come to you naturally because they'll see that you are a source of good information about stuff that they're interested in and you won't have that gross feeling of being a self-promoter because it is kind of an icky feeling and I think when people see it they think wow I can really help shed a spotlight on work that I think is good and then they feel better about it; they feel more comfortable with it because they see the value in that. If you can tell a lot of people about how great Will Paul is or whatever it is that you think is great then there's a real value to that.

Karl: Yeah, like after I met you at South by South West I knew your book was going to be good because your writing on your blog was so good, so I wasn't afraid to dedicate a post to you saying pre-order Gretchen's book.

Gretchen: I know, that was so nice thank you.

Karl: But I didn't do it to expect anything back; I just did it because I liked you and that's that friendship thing coming in, and that's what people want. People want that oh yeah he's a friend, oh yeah he works really hard, of course it's going to be good let me help him out, let me tell my friends about it.

Gretchen: You know I read some article too – I can't remember exactly what the statistics were but what they were measuring was how much do people, I can't remember but they said how much do people buy a book and how much do people click on a link, but a question was when people were talking about their own stuff or when they were talking about somebody else's stuff and people were much more likely to follow it up if it was somebody talking about somebody else's stuff. So not only is it sort of more gracious, but it's actually much more effective because when people like oh wow, well Karl said it was interesting so I read him and he says it's worth it so I'll take a look, whereas if I was saying it about myself they're like well of course she's going to say that. So yeah so it's really nice, and when you enter into that it's very helpful.

Karl: You know John Tesh of Duct Tape Marketing?

Gretchen: Yes.

Karl: He calls it basically referral marketing, and I use a lot of his concepts and that's what I'll do – like you said on Twitter I'll try to point away to other people, and then like you – it comes back to karma and then it just comes full circle. So one thing I'm dying to ask you is now that the book is out, it's been super successful, but what I am more interested in is are you happier? Do you feel – I know you talk about this in the book but I kind of want to hear how you feel now that you have some large separation – finished, complete, not how does Gretchen feel in summer 2010?

Gretchen: You know, having set out to do The Happiness Project I have to say that I am surprised at how effective it was. I mean, when we started it I really tried to hold myself up to the possibility that it might not make any difference because I felt like sort of from the scientific point of view maybe these things wouldn't make a difference. And so I really was trying to see if I thought that it would. And the thing is I'm amazed that it worked as well as it did. I really am

much happier, and I was pretty happy to start with. I was a pretty happy person and I have a very happy – I live in very happy circumstances. But nothing in my life really changed, and yet I am much happier and I think the people around me are happier too just because of these little changes that I made. So I am happier and to a surprising a degree. These little things really do end up making quite a bit of a difference.

Karl: So what's one thing that is a highlight to you that's worked so well, like a tip that we can give to the listeners?

Gretchen: Just in terms of getting the word out about the book or something?

Karl: Meaning like a happiness tip that they can apply.

Gretchen: Okay here it is, and it sounds too simplistic, but I would say the first thing to start with is to get enough sleep because if you're not getting enough sleep it's going to weigh you down, it's going to bring your mood down, it's going to bring your energy down, it's going to make you cranky and irritable, it's going to make you feel overwhelmed, it's going to hurt your immune system. If you're not sleeping well then it makes you sleep worse. It affects relationships, it turns out in *** books she talks about how people who don't get enough sleep that affects their marriage. It's such an easy thing not to focus on because at the end of the day, for a lot of people is there fun time, where they're just doing whatever they feel like doing and the more I thought about it and the more I got more sleep the more I just feel a dramatic change. And this is true for anyone. Some people need to have more adventure, and some people need to clear their clutter, and some people need to work on their marriage, and there's so many things that people can try, that I tried, that might work too, but I think that is a really good basic thing because your body is always going to affect your experience of life and we adjust to not getting enough sleep; we don't realize how far off of our game we are. But, I really feel a difference now that I get more sleep. They think it's a big factor in post partum depression, so it sounds – this is not a trend setting idea; it's a very basic idea, but I would throw that out there.

Karl: Now what do you do? Do you go to bed early?

Gretchen: Yeah I go to bed early. As soon as I'm sleepy I go to sleep.

Karl: So as soon as it hits you instead of watching that one extra episode of Seinfeld –

Gretchen: Yeah no, no, and I try not to do things like – I used to try to have the last thing I do sort of clean out my email so I would have a clean slate, as much as I could, before I went to bed, but I realized email woke me up; it would make me alert because I would sort of be reacting to things or get interested in things, and so it would wake me up. So now after light eight O'clock or something it's like I'm not going to go on that email because it will wake me up, and I try to – I really try to bring myself closer to quiet and feeling very calm. And I also exercise – it turns out that exercise, even like a 20 minute walk, if you have trouble sleeping exercise will really help you sleep better. And exercise is hugely important for happiness too. You don't have to train for a marathon, but just a little bit of exercise will really boost your mood as well, and so if you can do a 20 minute walk and go to bed half-an-hour earlier you might really feel a lot better just as you move through your day because what happens if you're feel tired and lethargic, even things that should be fun seem overwhelming and – you know, like planning a party, decorating for the holidays, or preparing for a trip or something like that. Ordinarily you might enjoy it, but it's like you feel like you can't handle it; you feel so frazzled. I think a lot of it is just from sheer exhaustion. So getting a little bit of exercise and getting enough really will give you more energy because energy is very tied to happiness; the feeling of energy.

Karl: That's a great point, and for me actually when I've exercised I don't seem to worry as much – I don't know it helps me center my thoughts. Maybe it's a positive boost – those chemicals running through your brain, and then that fear doesn't kick in. So for me I'm trying to bring it back to fear a little bit too is, you're stressed, you're worried, you're more likely to have more fear in your life.

Gretchen: Absolutely 100 percent. I think when you're feeling both energetic and calm then you also have more of a buffer, so when things are really stressing you out or when you're trying to make yourself make a big leap you feel like you have that energy that you need, whereas if you feel frazzled and overwhelmed it's very intimidating to push yourself out of your comfort zone or to try something new or to take a risk or really to get yourself to do something that you know you maybe have a lot of resistance to. So I think the more you can give yourself a feeling of – that you have that emotional bank account, you can spend it then, whereas if you feel like you're tapped out you sort of feel like you have nothing more to give and then the fear becomes insurmountable.

Karl: That's a great point. As we wrap this up, I don't want to take up all your time, but one thing I want to ask you is what is one thing you would do differently at the first time you started this career?

Gretchen: What would I do differently when I was starting? I don't know, I don't know, I mean if I were to do the same things that I did then now with the benefit of what I know now I would do them differently, but at the time I'm not sure that I would have been able to do them differently. I don't know - I'd have to think about that; that's a very intriguing question so I'll have to do a lot more self-reflection.

Karl: Because for me I think I would have started a blog back in like 2001.

Gretchen: Oh I see, yeah that's a good idea; that's a good one. Okay I'm with you there. I hadn't even heard of a blog then.

Karl: I hadn't either.

Gretchen: No you're right; all these things - yeah you read about these people that are like I had a blog in 1999, and you're like wow you really - that's cool.

Karl: Ahead of the curve yeah. Well thank you so much.

Gretchen: Well thank you so much this is so much fun to talk to you.

Karl: Oh it was great hearing your voice, and everybody this is Gretchen Rubin of The Happiness Project and thanks very much Gretchen.

Gretchen: Oh thank you.