

Improv Is No Joke - Episode 50 - Reverend Susanna Goulder

Rev Susanna: [00:00:00] It comes about being in tune with what your personal strengths are, as well as what your passions are, as well as what your values are. And if your life is lined up with all of those it does become easier because when you're asked to do a project you don't have to study and figure it out because you've already got it innately in You.

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Peter: [00:00:32] Welcome to Improv is no Joke podcast, where it's all about becoming a more effective communicator by embracing the principles of improvisation. I'm your host Peter Margaritis, the self-proclaimed chief edutainment officer of my business, [The Accidental Accountant](#). My goal is to provide you with thought-provoking interviews with business leaders so you can become an effective improviser, which will lead to building stronger relationships with clients, customers, colleagues and even your family, so let's start the show.

[music]

Peter: [00:01:04] Welcome to episode 50 of Improv is no Joke podcast. Thank you very much for downloading this episode. Today's guest is Reverend Susanna Goulder, who is a life purpose coach. Susanna helps people remove obstacles to step into the life that they were meant to live. She specializes in helping entrepreneurs and professionals quiet their minds to align with their strengths and purpose. Susanna helps organizations with women's initiatives. Her timely, highly interactive programs help organizations understand the distinct and separate roles of gender communication that are a key factor to increasing success, retaining top talent, and increasing profits. Susanna is the life purpose coach and president of Live Your Good Life coaching. She is also a visiting faculty member of the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland. Susanna left her successful career in Motion Pictures and Television and entered the seminary to lead a Purpose Driven Life. Susanna was the original set decorator for Sex and the City. In this insightful episode, we talk about her time as the original set decorator of Sex And The City and the tremendous amount of work and thought that goes into set design. Even though she had it all and everything looked good on the outside, but inside she felt like a square peg in a round hole. Now the challenge becomes that you start beating yourself up. But the ultimate challenge is to not beat yourself up and to start to listen to ourselves. If you've been listening to my podcast for a while, you know that one of my goals with this podcast is to help you begin to make changes in your work and personal lives so you can better connect with others and create meaningful relationships. To be successful at this change, you need to make it a habit. Research has shown that it takes 66 days to create a habit, not 21. That's why I created the Yes, And challenge: to help keep these principles in front of you so you can build up your improvisational muscle. To sign up, please go to [PeterMargaritis.com](#) and scroll down to the Yes, And challenge call to action, and click to register to begin building the productive habit of Yes And, and the principles of improvisation. And remember to share your experiences on Twitter using the hashtag #YesAndChallenge. If you're unsure of what the yes and challenge is all about, I discuss this in greater detail in Episode 0. So go back and take a listen. Remember you can subscribe to my podcast on [iTunes](#), [Stitcher](#), and [Google Play](#). If you'd like to purchase an autographed copy of my book *Improv is no Joke: Using Improvisation to Create Positive Results in Leadership and Life*, for \$14.99 with free shipping, please go to my website,

PeterMargaritis.com, and you'll see the graphic on the homepage to purchase my book. Please allow 14 days for shipping. You can also follow me on social media. You can find me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#). With that said, let's get to the very informative interview with Reverend Susanna Goulder.

[music]

Peter: [00:04:34] Susanna, thank you so very much for being a guest on my podcast today. I've been so looking forward to our conversation.

Rev Susanna: [00:04:41] And me as well.

Peter: [00:04:44] We go back oh many many years I guess Susanna, from really from our relationship at the National Speakers Association Ohio chapter.

Rev Susanna: [00:04:54] How lucky we are.

Peter: [00:04:57] Well, how lucky I am. We'll figure the other side of it out, having me as one of your colleagues and cohorts and stuff.

Rev Susanna: [00:05:08] Well we'll figure that out today.

Peter: [00:05:10] Exactly. [laughs] So Susanna could you tell the audience your story. Tell us about you.

Rev Susanna: [00:05:21] I'd be happy to. I'd be happy to. Well I'm Reverend Susanna Goulder, and I'm president of Live Your Good Life Coaching, and what I do— Well you know, essentially, [00:05:34] everybody here, all of us, come down to we want to be happy. We want to live a life that supports happiness. And in my journey of life that's really what I was seeking, from a very very young age. [17.3] Peter when I was probably about 9 I was in the auditorium at Sunday school, and I might have been even younger. I might have been seven, for all I know, and I was walking across the stage, and it's interesting it was a stage, and all of a sudden as a little girl just playing, and in Sunday school, I stopped dead in my tracks and I looked at all the people - the kids and all of everything around me - And the thought came in. [00:06:30] Do you know those experiences where, once in a while, a thought bigger than who you are comes into your mind? And in that moment it was just my heart stopped. Everything stopped, and there was a thought that said "why are we here?" And there was something in me that realized there was no actual reason for us being here - that it was actually somewhat unusual for beings to be living, and from that moment in that very young mind I realized there was a mystery to life... and why was I here? [43.6] And then in a blink of an eye, I was back into action running around with the kids and chasing around. But that moment stuck with me.

Peter: [00:07:23] Wow.

Rev Susanna: [00:07:24] Yeah. Did you ever have an experience like that?

Peter: [00:07:28] Not at nine. [laughs] I think that's the part that just... I didn't know that about you, but just kind of blows me away that you had that cognizant of a memory, of a thought, at nine years old. That's so impactful.

Rev Susanna: [00:07:48] What was interesting was it was almost as if time stood still in that moment, and that experience happened, and it was interesting that it was on the stage because, as I said, people are looking to be happy.

Peter: [00:08:04] Right.

Rev Susanna: [00:08:05] And yet, in life, there's always clues along the way for us. So it's interesting I was on a stage because, in my life, my passion was theater, and I chose I wanted to be an actor. And I was very lucky that my passion for the theater took me to touring the United States and playing Lincoln Center by the age of 17.

Peter: [00:08:33] Wow!

Rev Susanna: [00:08:35] Yeah! It was great. It was great. And theater led to motion pictures and television, and that's where I discovered my best life in film. And I wanted to be the greatest actress of our time. When I found that my best expression in film was as a set decorator— set decorator is so much fun. Sets were my canvases and decorating was my art. And basically if you envision a room, there's the floor, there's the ceilings, there's the wall, and all everything that is adhered to. Even the floor and the wall has been brought in by the set decorator. Every single solitary thing. And so I got to create an environment that propelled the story of every movie or television show I worked on. And I got to work on pictures with some of the greats throughout my 22 years in motion pictures and television. I worked with Meryl Streep, who was hysterically funny, and Goldie Hawn, who was like a bee to honey with men. It was my jaw would drop. It was unbelievable. Jack Nicholson, who is just an amazing actor. Makes it look so easy. Kevin Spacey, also 24 hours seven days a week a comedian. Hysterical. Wesley Snipes, strong man the guy worked out every day. And Kevin Bacon, who at a wrap party asked me to slow dance with him.

Peter: [00:10:17] Whoo! Wow.

Rev Susanna: [00:10:17] I got to slow dance with Kevin Bacon. Of course I have to add all the other members of my crew as well. There's other decorators, but it was wonderful. He was he was a consummate professional, and really just amazing man. And I was the original set decorator for Sex and the City, working with the team that created the look of that show.

Peter: [00:10:40] Whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa. Did you just say Sex and the city?

Rev Susanna: [00:10:45] Yeah.

Peter: [00:10:46] Wow. The original set decorator for Sex and the City?

Rev Susanna: [00:10:49] Yeah.

Peter: [00:10:51] I knew that, but when it when you read it on paper it doesn't have the same power as it does coming from you. That's that's that's super impressive. I'm at a lack of words. What was that like, being the set decorator on Sex and the City? Because if it's the first season, you kind of... you almost have like a license to almost do anything creative because it hasn't been established yet. Would that be a correct statement?

Rev Susanna: [00:11:23] It was amazing. Taking these characters and saying, "OK how can we express their personalities in the set?" And we went out and I had four assistants going to all the tri state area. In other words, New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey, going to flea markets and antique stores. Thousands and thousands of pictures of options. Every single piece handpicked to express the personality of Sarah Jessica Parker and Carrie, to the point where we look everywhere just for this coffee table that I wanted, that I thought in my head. Finally I just had the carpenters build what I thought in my head. Her lounge that was in her apartment. We looked high and low for it, and I actually saw it on the cover of a book and I said oh this is the one I want, and you got to go find it. And you know to Samantha's apartment, and her very you know sensual sexy personality to Mr. Big. I love doing Mr. Big's apartment and creating that you know masculine and yet prosperous very you know... who he was. It was a blast. And the production designer was just a genius. And the sets were so much fun. Jeremy Conway was a designer and he is just amazing. So it was it was an amazing experience and I have complete admiration for Sarah Jessica Parker as a person. She's a beautiful woman. Not an ounce of fat in any wrong place on her body.

Peter: [00:13:25] [laughs]

Rev Susanna: [00:13:26] Yeah I was like oh my god how could it be so perfect? Perfect body. Perfect. But more importantly, who she was as a person, she was an amazing... She commanded respect of men and women by her presence. Extremely kind. And yet she knew what she wanted and was very clear. Emanated respect. She's a wonderful person. You just wanted to be good around her because she came from the right place. Her heart was always in the right place. Very respectful of the people that worked with her. And she didn't feel like she was putting herself on a pedestal. And yet very intelligent, very smart. Knew what she wanted. Knew how to communicate it. Easy to work with. She was wonderful.

Peter: [00:14:16] So you could say she was— She found that happiness.

Rev Susanna: [00:14:20] She was in the right place doing exactly what her talents were beautifully expressed, and that's what everyone – whether it's an accountant, whether it's a lawyer, whether it's an artist. That's what everyone wants to do: be in a place where they're expressing their talent, their strengths, and where they're living true to their own values. And at that time I was expressing myself in ways that I loved. I own an eight thousand square foot prop house in midtown Manhattan, providing prop and set dressing to movie, theater, and television, and at the same time as being a decorator. And yet, and here's the important thing for everyone listening in, and I'm really thinking of you guys right now. Here's the important thing about creating a life of happiness: at the same time I was doing all that, and on the outside it looked great. [00:15:23] I mean I was bringing in the money, getting the jobs, had a very successful life... at the same time, there was a part of me that felt a little bit like a square peg in a round hole. And at that time I only knew that I wasn't exactly happy. [23.0] I couldn't... I didn't know why, and I kept looking at others and saying well they're doing this. Let me try doing what

they're doing. And she's doing that, let me try doing what she's doing. And I kept looking outside myself to try and find where I fit in – that place where I say I'm happy. [00:16:11] I love life, you know, but at that time, even though it looked good, I mean inside it didn't feel good. I didn't know what was wrong, and the challenge is – and I'm speaking to people in your listening audience – the challenge is, when life is like that, is that you start beating up yourself and saying what's wrong with me. And the ultimate challenge is not turning it inward and beating yourself up, but to start to listen. [35.4] Like I know, Peter, in your book... so much of your book, Improv is no Joke, is about listening well.

Peter: [00:16:53] Exactly.

Rev Susanna: [00:16:54] And [00:16:55] you teach to listen well with others, and we also need to listen well with ourselves. [6.7]

Peter: [00:17:02] That's interesting. Listening to ourselves as that listening skill. But a lot of times when I think about listening I think about something that you've taught me over the years: it's not about me, it's about the audience. And I think that listening to the way I teach listening is like what we're doing right now, in this interview. I have no scripted questions. I'm listening to the conversation. I'm crafting you know maybe what my next question or jotting some notes down to just to be able to move the conversation forward, but [00:17:42] I don't think we do that well when we try to listen to ourselves. I think it takes a lot more effort, and maybe even more than effort: patience. [10.8]

Rev Susanna: [00:17:53] You know it's effort, it's patience, but it's also understanding the species that we are and where we are in our evolution. Stanford did a study of the brain, and what they found– and most people know that there are two hemispheres of the brain, there is the left and the right hemispheres of the brain, and that the left hemisphere is the one that is very practical, pragmatic; it makes sure you're safe. Survival oriented and analytical. The right hemisphere is the creative side. It's where inspiration comes from. It's the one that passion comes from, and what they did is they looked at the neurons and the neurotransmitters and they said that the left side of our brain is like superhighway; we are thinking so much on the left and making sure we're doing the right thing. Dotting the i's and crossing the T's, and it's a superhighway of analysis, and also judgment, and also being critical, because we have to be critical to be safe. We have to look at that hot stove and say watch out - don't touch it or you're going to burn yourself. So that side of our brain is like a superhighway.

Peter: [00:19:20] So what you just described was an accountant, an engineer, that type of profession, per se.

Rev Susanna: [00:19:29] It's for all people, and gosh knows what it's like even more... if it's a super highway for the typical average American, for the accountants and lawyers and the engineers it's probably a super highway into other planets. It is the super highway of the 22nd century. It has drones going, as well.

Peter: [00:19:59] I love that picture you just painted.

Rev Susanna: [00:20:02] Yeah. The thoughts are everywhere. I know that there's a lot of critical analysis going on. So in terms of a personal human being, it's like are you doing the right thing?

Should you be doing this? Why are you doing that? Now the right side of the brain is also on a transportation road system. But you know what kind of road system? In other words, how much is that system of thought developed in our brain?

Peter: [00:20:32] Hm.

Rev Susanna: [00:20:32] It's like a dirt path path. [laughs]

Peter: [00:20:38] [laughs] I was thinking maybe it was a 35 mile an hour speed zone. OK so it's a dirt path.

Rev Susanna: [00:20:45] So as a species we very much develop the left brain, but we've underdeveloped the right brain. We're out of balance. So as individuals, our challenge is to: instead of criticizing ourselves, judging ourselves, and analyzing ourselves, our challenge is to build up that right brain. [26.4] So to take out more time to listen to ourselves, to go on a walk and put down the work, to do things that... we can listen to ourselves. Even by doing an exercise - going out and playing a game of tennis or going for a jog. Some people jog and it brings great clarity, or yoga. Whatever it is that takes you out of that left brain. "I'll do this. Are you doing that? Did you finish that. You got more work to do. Well look at our calendar and fill it up even more." But just going out and having fun. So you know a client— let me give a quick example. A client that came to me and we were talking, and she was at a point where her eyes were dim and she was just... she has a business. She did worked successfully for 18 years. She tried a new initiative, and it was very much from the left brain. She had been part of Goldman Sachs 10000... I can't remember the name of it, but she had gone through this whole program with Goldman Sachs. She tried this new initiative. At the end of it, it didn't really work. And she was OK with it, but she had all this energy within her. Come on let's go forward. Let's come up with a new initiative... And she looked bad. And she felt like how can I hold myself accountable everyday for getting things done? We were in this Goldman Sachs program. Now we don't have that group-filled energy with us anymore. So my team and I were trying to reenergize ourselves, and they don't look energized at all. She looked frustrated and dim. She looked dim. Her energy was dim. And a lot of suggestions just would bounce off her like no that won't work, no we tried that, no I tried that before. You know how you get that way?

Peter: [00:23:20] Yes. It's just like you give up a little bit.

Rev Susanna: [00:23:25] Yeah.

Peter: [00:23:26] You become supercritical. It's almost like you've created this new bias in your head. That almost defeat type of attitude.

Rev Susanna: [00:23:38] Yeah. And she didn't realize it, and I don't think we realize it. We think OK I just have to work harder and I'll come to it. You don't necessarily— I'm not sure she ever necessarily saw, and I love that word you used, that she had a bias; a defeatist bias.

Peter: [00:23:58] Right.

Rev Susanna: [00:23:59] We were talking, and we were talking about accountability. And she felt, left brain, I need to get up early. I need to do this. I need to fill out my day. I need to fill out

the week. My team needs to come together. We need to come up with this new brilliant idea, and we need to go forward, and I can't give myself a break because this is needed. You know you know that experience where it's just like... the picture I got in my head is that you know the carriage driver whipping the horse with the whip. Come on keep going. Keep going.

Peter: [00:24:38] Wow, you can see into my house.

Rev Susanna: [00:24:42] [laughs.] Yeah

Peter: [00:24:42] You can see in my office because I get that feeling sometimes. You've got all this stuff that you want to accomplish, and then my super highway must be on steroids because this very task oriented, get things done... But my eyes haven't dimmed. Still you know bright eyed and bushy tailed, but you can tell this person sounds like she's almost... not at the end of her rope, but she's just... corporate America got her; spent. Yeah.

Rev Susanna: [00:25:14] And you know it happens a lot to accountants and engineers, especially accountants, especially in season. I mean there's so much to do and there's so much expected of you that you've got to go and you've got to produce and you got to bring in the clients and you've got to get the report out. There's so much to do and you see others doing it around you, and why can't you do as much or why can't you do more? There's a lot of pressure.

Peter: [00:25:38] Exactly. There's a tremendous amount of pressure.

Rev Susanna: [00:25:41] Yes, a tremendous amount of pressure. And so I was talking to to her about... because she put so much of it on herself, I said you know take a look outside right now. And we turned around and we saw the winter trees in northeast Ohio, and they were there against a gray background. And you know they might have one leaf sort of dangling that had been there since the fall. But it's still barren, and the silhouette of branches with nothing. No life. And I asked her to take a look at it and I said is that how it feels right now? She said it kind of does.

Peter: [00:26:30] [laughs.]

Rev Susanna: [00:26:30] "It just... I mean I keep trying to make life come, but it's not coming." What she was wanting to see is the leaves you know take leaves and glue them to the tree. I said you know but on the outside you see no life no evidence of life ever going to come. We know in our mind that eventually it will, but we don't see any evidence of life. But underneath there's so much life happening. Underneath there's the preparation of the seeds in the soil, and we can't see all that happening underneath that's preparing for the spring that will sprout new growth and the new blossoms. And the same thing is happening for you, I said, and could be happening for people listening right now. There may be people that are listening right now saying you know I want to be happy, but no matter what I do I'm doing everything to make myself happy... or I could be happier. The thing is, can we move to that stillness, like there's a stillness of winter. And there may be people on the call right now who there's a stillness in their lives that they see as stagnation, and yet underneath, within them, there's so much happening. But instead of using the left brain to analyze it sit down and let's let's do the pros and cons of that analysis. Right?

Peter: [00:27:58] Right.

Rev Susanna: [00:27:59] What do we do? What do we do about this? We need to fix it!

Peter: [00:28:02] Take a legal pad out and start writing down.

Rev Susanna: [00:28:07] [laughs.

Peter: [00:28:07] One side pro's, one side con's.

Rev Susanna: [00:28:09] Yes that's right.

Peter: [00:28:11] Right.

Rev Susanna: [00:28:12] How do I make a decision about this? What we're invited to do is build up this right brain hemisphere, which says to you know go within and be quiet. You know what? [00:28:26] Your best life is continually coming to life, and watching what's happening in your life will guide you. But you have to be quiet because, if you're using your mind to direct yourself, then you're not paying attention to the world around you giving you signs. [17.6] So in my case, I was in the film business and I had a great life and I could strategize forever how to get to further in my career, and I had plans for retirement. And, yet, when I was listening, there was something that wasn't right and I wasn't happy.

Peter: [00:29:06] Let me... I want to ask you a question first. You said something about quiet. [00:29:11] I want you to define quiet, because when you're talking about the right side of the brain and the creative thoughts versus the analytical, the the dirt highway, is quiet meaning a dark room, lights turned out, no sound? Or is quiet meaning I stopped that superhighway left side and I'm doing something to slow the left side and reenergized the right? [31.1] And I ask this in the sense of I get some of my best ideas, or I get a lot of ideas, when I jump on my bicycle and I go riding. I seem to slow down that left side and sometimes I can see... and maybe it's the endorphins, when they kick in, I see things a lot differently. I come up with more creative ideas. I don't feel that that left side dominating me. Is that a version of quiet?

Rev Susanna: [00:30:17] You know that's a perfect example. And you know for the engineers and the accountants that are listening in: these kind of things, like hopping on a bike, what you want to do is bring what is fun for you. Something that's fun for you, and for all I know it could be video games, but whatever is fun and engages you. With that client that I was talking to, I said to her... when's the last time you went out and had some fun? Is your work fun for you anymore? And you could see something really settle in; nothing was fun for her anymore, and the freedom to think that if she spent time having fun it actually could resolve her problem, in the same way that you go bike riding. I know for me, as a speaker, if I start writing a speech and I get stuck, I sit there and I'll try and pull it out and figure it out. And I do - I get on the bike if I get stuck. I don't even waste time trying to push an answer anymore. If I can't figure out an answer, I get on the bike, and within 20 minutes like more than one answer- 50 answers come about! 50 different things I'm trying to figure out. And so, for each of us, [00:31:42] it doesn't matter if we're left brained or right or people. What we want to do is find ways, when we get in that stuck time, where we're pushing at the work in front of us, to just step away. You can go for an errand -quiet time can even just be going out and going for an errand.

Peter: [00:32:02] Just something different. [21.1]

Rev Susanna: [00:32:04] Just something different. Steven Spielberg got some of his best ideas, he said, as he was driving. He'd go for a drive.

Peter: [00:32:13] Hm.

Rev Susanna: [00:32:13] And so sometimes when I get stuck it's like you know get away from the desk. I have a couple of errands to run. Let me run those errands. And then my mind is freed. [00:32:23] There's another thing about brain science: if you take your hands and you put your thumb underneath your four fingers, so you bend over your four fingers and you kind of put your thumb horizontally underneath the four fingers, that's somewhat the shape of the parietal lobe. And there's a little space there. That's about as much room as we have for new thoughts and new ideas to come in. So when we're working hard, it fills up, [37.6] and for different people it could be a different amount of time. Depending on the day, as well. It could be an hour or two hour three hours or four hours. But, eventually, it's like a sponge that can only take in so much water, and then it can't take in any more. So if we sit and continue to try to pummel in more information or try to figure out how to put two and two together or to complete the analysis you're putting together... you can't anymore, and it's those times where your best productivity is stepping away, and doing something else. And then it let that sponge release some of the liquid and make room for more.

Peter: [00:33:48] I like that analogy. I really do, because I very much can relate with that. When I get stuck in whatever I'm doing, I have learned to step away from the spreadsheets, step away from the the computer, and just go do something different. And what you said about Spielberg driving a car, you brought back something I haven't done in a long time, but I don't remember when I was working on. But man I was stuck. So I jumped in my car and was just driving. And before I knew it I was in Cleveland. I didn't realize it.

Rev Susanna: [00:34:24] [laughs]

Peter: [00:34:24] I mean I was... I would say I was driving, I was cognizant of the road, but I wasn't really cognizant of where I was going. I was just trying to figure this thing out, and that seemed to help clear my head and come up with an answer, albeit I lost four hours of my day.

Rev Susanna: [00:34:42] But did you lose hours or did you gain insight needed? Was it worth the time?

Peter: [00:34:47] Yes. As soon as I said that, I went ah.. yeah. I thank you for mentioning that because it was well worth the time, and it did help solve the problem I was stuck in. But I think today is - we're recorded this on April 11th - Most of my accounting brothers who are in public accounting are seeing that light at the end of the tunnel, and they're just hoping it's not a train coming at them in full blast.

Rev Susanna: [00:35:20] [laughs]

Peter: [00:35:20] But I have lived through my fair share of what we call a busy season - I like to look at it as opportunity season because that's where we make most of our revenue and profits - But it is just inundated, from the moment you walk in to the moment you leave, of just left brain, compliance, work. And I did see, I was in an accounting firm in Maryland I believe, and I was really kind of shocked because it was an accounting firm and they had this room and it had a nameplate on it saying relaxation room. I went whaaaaat?!

Rev Susanna: [00:35:58] [laughs]

Peter: [00:35:58] I opened it. I opened the door. There's a lazy boy recliner in there and one of those trickily waterfalls. And I said, Really? And I asked a few people around the firm. So tell me about this relaxation room. "If we need to step away, we can go into this room for 20-30 minutes and just take a quick power nap or just step away from the spreadsheet so we can get our thoughts back. So, as you said, so we can make more room so we can squeeze out that sponge and be able to soak in some more ideas; to come up with some new... Just getting away from it.

Rev Susanna: [00:36:35] That is so great. You know, as people, what we want to do is, when we are in that optimistic, in the zone... we want to be in the zone.

Peter: [00:36:45] Right.

Rev Susanna: [00:36:46] Because when we're in the zone, things are flowing and we're happy. The works getting done. And then there are also times, and these aren't bad times because it's also an opportunity season, but there are times when we aren't in the zone, we're not getting things done, we're judgmental of ourselves, and perhaps hating our lives for what it's looking like. We're beating ourselves up. And at that time, a power nap is a great thing because it stops that thinking mind that's in that negative place, and it sort of reboots. So power nap. Some people meditate. Meditation also quiets the thoughts, and that's why it's well embraced these days, because sleeping and meditating stop that negative thought cycle and get you back into being in the zone. And that's the goal: how can I be in that zone? Because when you're in that zone, you're a magnet to opportunity. You know how it is when things are going wrong... it's like you're a magnet to things going wrong! You can have the worst day possible and, finally, like finally I'm headed home, and then have a flat tire.

Peter: [00:37:59] [laughs] Are you kidding me?

Rev Susanna: [00:37:59] But, when things are going right, it's like you don't have to try at all and the phone rings and can you do this for me? And you know you get an email and somebody else wants to do something, and then you go to the store and they say "Here, you walked in here the 1000th customer, you get the TV for free today," you know. And so you want to be in that place - that magnetic zone of opportunity where things are going your way. That, again, is building up that right side of the brain. Or we could say build up that zone side of the brain. Build up those opportunities more, and that is also realizing that there are transitions and crossroads that come when we're not expecting it, and not to try to force them to make them be OK, but to listen to them and let them be our guide. So as I was saying, in the film business, I was listening to the transition and saying something's up here. You know, for the last five years, when I was in the film business, it was a love hate relationship because my values with the film business... they were starting to diverge. I wanted to take more time to be at peace. I wanted to eat

healthier. I wanted to have better relationships, and the relationship with the film business is a very... it's a very jealous relationship because the film business wants about 95 percent of your time and your life. And so there was a day that I went into the into the film business, I was on a job, and it was a television show, and you know the producer had some feelings for me that I did not have for him in the same way. And he had me let go in a way... I had never saw it coming. And in one day, I was off the job. I went home and I was sitting on my balcony looking out over the Hudson River and the Palisades, and I said that's it. I'm done with the film business. And it was one day, the day before I thought the film business would be my life until retirement, but in that day that was the straw that broke the camel's back. And I said I guess I'm done. You know, not everyone has to take a big huge change, but in my case I did. But how did I know it was the right thing? Because it could have been a stupid mistake, you know. Could have been the stupidest thing I ever did. Is it reaction, or an attraction to my good? About a week later I signed up for seminary. It's something that I'd always considered. I never saw where I'd fit in in my life, but I signed up for seminary.

Peter: [00:41:14] Mhm.

Rev Susanna: [00:41:14] And then the next day, in my church, somebody from my church called out to the minister and said we believe in you and what you're doing. So we're going to pay half the tuition of your seminary.

Peter: [00:41:29] Wow.

Rev Susanna: [00:41:30] And I'm speaking to someone or some people listening now: you're going to get that confirmation. If we listen, the world around us speaks to us and guides us, I believe. It's happened a lot for me in my life, and in that moment I knew I was on the right track. I had a family. I had friends telling me stay in the film business, take some jobs, or some money. But in that moment I felt that the universe was telling me you're doing the right thing. Keep going. And the first day that I sat in that chair at seminary I just... I found myself in the right place. I no longer felt like a square peg in a round hole. I felt like my whole life had prepared me. I was finally being who I was meant to be. And Mark Twain had that memorable, memorable quote: "The two best days of a person's life: The first day is the day you are born and the second day is when you discover why." And there's such a release of stress. I know it happened to you. You were laid off, right?

Peter: [00:42:43] Right. Yeah.

Rev Susanna: [00:42:45] It looked like a big obstacle.

Peter: [00:42:48] Right.

Rev Susanna: [00:42:49] And look what happened.

Peter: [00:42:51] Same thing. Caught me completely off guard. Next thing you know, I'm I'm unemployed going I mean I've left jobs before, but I've never been asked to leave a job before.

Rev Susanna: [00:43:01] [laughs]

Peter: [00:43:01] And I was in this fog. "Sorry we've eliminated your position in your department." Uh.. OK. And I was in a fog for a couple - two or three - days, and I remember someone. I don't remember who it was, but someone said you're going to look back on this to be the best thing that could have ever happened to you. And you know the person was right because I did. It allowed me three months to regroup. To your point, to listen to myself, to listen to the environment around me, and that put me down a path... put me down a journey that, ultimately, got me to where I am today, of owning my own business, my own speaking business, going out having fun with audiences and teaching. If I hadn't been laid off, I may have never become a teacher. And I look back on it and went you know everything happens for a reason.

Rev Susanna: [00:44:08] Yeah.

Peter: [00:44:09] Even... I've been divorced. The first Mrs. Margaritis... we were married for about three years. We left Fort Myers, Florida, for Cleveland, Ohio. Long story. And then we got divorced, but I even look back on that time, where we divorced, and I took it very bad, very badly. It was a very very dark time in my life.

Rev Susanna: [00:44:34] Yeah.

Peter: [00:44:34] But looking back on it, I never would have met her. I never would have gotten to Cleveland, gotten the case. I thought what would have happened if I never left Florida, where would I be, or would I be... And you know everything happens for a reason. Sometimes it's... it's hard to see the purpose of it, but ultimately that there is a purpose of it.

Rev Susanna: [00:45:03] Yeah. And that, again, is living in that right brain. Considering there's an opportunity, rather than looking at that as critical. [00:45:14] When a transition comes, when a failure comes, when the obstacle comes... Rather than looking at it critically and analytically, shift and saying this is an opportunity. How can I set up my life to make this opportunity grow? To help the opportunity? To allow the new normal to come in, rather than be critical of it and beating myself up and taking it out on me. But what if it's that the universe or God or your best life is actually calling to you? Can you listen and say how can I help you build this so that I allow myself to be guided through this to the opportunity that I had? [54.9]

Peter: [00:46:10] I agree. I think where this happiness comes from... you're making me think about this, and I tell people that 2010 is when I went full time with my business - I have not worked a day since then. You asked my wife. I work all the time.

Rev Susanna: [00:46:29] Yeah [laughs]

Peter: [00:46:29] The only way to get the phone away from me is taking me to a country that does have Wi-Fi to stay connected.

Rev Susanna: [00:46:36] [laughs]

Peter: [00:46:37] And I think I get that happiness because I'm helping people.

Rev Susanna: [00:46:42] Yeah. So here's the thing, and I hate to interject, but because we're talking to- many of the people listening are accountants and engineers. I want to encourage that

it doesn't mean you have to stop what you're doing and totally change to be something different. One of my clients that was an accountant came to me and she wasn't happy at the firm. She was very unhappy and she was thinking of leaving and moving on and doing something herself. And we started looking at her values. We did an assessment of what her actual top five strengths were, and in time what we saw is that she was just a little off in what she was doing in the firm. And so she started talking to her superiors and just doing a little bit of tweaks with them as well as with her and her time there. And then she fit in to how she expresses herself perfectly and was able to use her strengths better and feel like she was expressing her values and living her values and not countering everything she wanted to be, but actually being in the place... she really adored the people she worked with, and was now able to funnel herself in a better way.

[00:48:13] And so part of it is getting the help need to to find where you're in your own way, and how simple adjustments can be made to be either uncomfortable and unhappy or to be really just radiating joy by doing your job in ways where you can really let your talents flow out better - and then you're more productive, you're more passionate, you're more fun, you're more magnetic to the opportunities, and everybody is happier because the superiors are going to be happier you're doing what you're doing. [38.2] You're more productive, living with purpose... And you know accountants - I love talking to accountants and seeing their eyes brighten when talking about how they're helping their clients achieve their financial goals, and lawyers who protect the rights of individuals; the justice in the world. [00:49:10] There's purpose everywhere. It's a finding of how to settle into where you are, where you're expressing your strengths... [8.7] because when you are like you, Peter, you're expressing your strengths - you're a teacher! And so it's easy. It gets easy! [00:49:26] We want it to be easy, and well-being is easy when you're in the right place doing the right thing. [7.0]

Peter: [00:49:34] I want to change one word you said. Versus easy, I'm just say that when you're in your zone because you will work hard as you can when you're in that zone. And then it comes into play as it comes easier to you to do that. When you when you find that the passion that you love... and you're right. Accountants, lawyers, sales people. I think everybody really wants to help their clients or customers, the people they work with, the people they manage. And when we can do that in a way that it becomes second nature. And we're always striving to get better. I think that's part of being happy.

Rev Susanna: [00:50:19] It is, and what happens is when we're unhappy where we're focusing on ourselves because we're unhappy and we're constantly trying to fix things. And so our focus is on self and turned inward and it can end up being self centered. But when we find ourselves doing what we love to do, suddenly we're looking outward. How can we help because now we're funneling that passion. We have that drive. We are productive. And it's... I've got this how can I help you. Let me give let me give it away. I got that. Let me give you, let me help you. I'm a sales person. I've got something that's going to help you and I know it's going to help your life. Let me help you. I'm an accountant. I know how to help you ease your financial pain. Let me help you - and so that's when we become outwardly focused. And that's the biggest doubt as we as we mature. How can we be the one to help the world? And when we are the one making a difference in our community that brings such joy to our heart.

Peter: [00:51:33] It does. it really really does. And I think this is something that you taught me a while ago about knowing your audience. It's about them. It's not about me. And the more that we look at them, and them being whether, like I said, someone you work with, your customers or clients or family or whoever. [00:51:54] Once we are more outwardly focused versus inner

focused... Maybe things become easier. I think of easy like the easy button on Staples, but no, things become easier. I guess it takes less work.

Rev Susanna: [00:52:11] It does. And that's the goal, and it really does happen that way. It just flows. It flows easier, and it comes about being in tune with what your personal strengths are, as well as what your passions are, as well as what your values are. And if your life is lined up with all of those, it does become easier [43.5] because when you're asked to do a project you don't have to study and figure it out because you've already got it innately in you. You may have to hone it - We're always honing our art of who we are - So we're stretching. Now, I was great in the film business. I have an excellent eye and I was a fantastic set decorator, but it wasn't innately in me and I could continue to do that job and I would output great. But it was hard. There were there were people that it just was who they were. They were living, breathing, drinking, and eating decorating. And now I live breathe drink... Everything about me is the life I'm living. And I can't stop leading it. I can't stop doing it. I can't stop it. It's everything I am, and you are - that's why your wife says you're working 24/7. It's not that you're working - you're having person living your life! it's your life, and so we want the people that are with us today and everyone to have that opportunity to really be in tune and just doing what you're really enjoying doing because then helping others just becomes natural. It just becomes natural because it's fun!

Peter: [00:54:11] You're right it is fun. So Susanna, as we begin to wrap up this interview. If somebody is listening to this and they want to get in contact with you for you to help them. How will they find you?

Rev Susanna: [00:54:23] Oh well I have some live events that are happening in May and June, and I have a book coming out. And if you're interested in attending a live event you're being put on the list to get the book, Manifest Your Big Best Life: Love What You Do, you can go to my website at www.live-good-life.com, or really just email me Susanna@live-good-life.com, and in the subject line "my purpose," and then I'll know that you're listening into this broadcast and I will respond right back to you.

Peter: [00:55:17] Wow that's great. And I'll also put that information in the show notes and it'll be in the transcript for you.

Rev Susanna: [00:55:24] I can't thank you enough. I love our conversation. I love the thoughts and things that you brought to the table to share with my audience. There are so many takeaways that you've given everybody here. Wonderful stories. Thank you so very much. And we will have to do this again.

Rev Susanna: [00:55:49] I'd love to.

Peter: [00:55:50] And go down another path because I have a feeling - well, we could talk for hours.

Rev Susanna: [00:55:56] I know. I know we just got started.

Peter: [00:55:59] Yeah. We're just getting revved up on that superhighway.

Rev Susanna: [00:56:04] We're revved up on that superhighway [laughs] That's right. Super Highway of opportunity. [00:56:13] Everyone in the audience that's in the middle of their busy season, and you know might be working really really super super hard, and just when you can just take a moment out even just to breathe. Just take a moment for yourself just to breathe. [18.5]

Peter: [00:56:32] That's the best tip to leave my audience. As we begin to sign off. So thank you again Susanna. I greatly appreciate your time and I'll be seeing you soon.

Rev Susanna: [00:56:44] I'll be seeing you soon. May I leave with a quote?

Peter: [00:56:46] Please do.

Rev Susanna: [00:56:47] OK. This is by Daniel Burnham: "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's and women's blood, and probably will themselves not be realized. Make big plans; Aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die."

Peter: [00:57:14] I would like to thank Susannah again for taking time out of her schedule to give us her thoughts on how to live the good life and sharing her stories about her time in Hollywood and working on the set of Sex And The City. In episode 51, I interview Aaron Dobber, who's the founder and CEO of Erin Dobber coaching and consulting, a firm specializing in providing coaching training and leadership development to the accounting industry. She's also the CPA exam guru. And if you are studying for the CPA exam or planning on it in the near future, this is a must listen to episode. Thank you again for listening, And remember to use the principles of improvisation to help you begin to live the good life.