

Improv Is No Joke - Episode 66 - Karen Eddington

Karen: [00:00:00] Laughter, dealing with our pressures, building trust, being vulnerable, understanding our boundaries... like this isn't just like a one time magic thing that we're going to figure out. It's a lifelong process.

Peter: [00:00:22] 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 to show

Peter: [00:00:54] Welcome to episode 66 and today my guest is Karen Eddington. who is the author of Understanding Self Worth, and she uses her experience in standup comedy and improv to teach laughter as a form of self-care. She has researched identity for 15 years looking for patterns and creating original solutions to help people under pressure. Her real talent is getting in a family of five in the car. What started as a research project to understand pressure now becomes an unexpected mission to heal the most universal and dangerous experiences we can have. You can watch Karen's TEDx talk to learn more about her research: Reach a Higher Level With Laughter and Connection. Karen works with audiences to improve productivity, form stronger teams, and build community. Research-based methods focus on building strong individuals who make powerful teams with confident leadership. Her programs have been described as a hilarious reality check, while being called a speaker who can create a community and bring the room together. Karen is a funny keynote speaker with a powerful emotional range. Our discussion focuses on her research project to understand pressure, along with a discussion on the role comedy and improv had in dealing with pressure. Before you get to the interview, I'd like to talk about Listen Learn and Earn. If you've been listening lately, you know I have partnered with the Maryland Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute to bring [an exciting new learning opportunity for accounting professionals to earn CPE credits](#). You can earn up to one CPE credit for each completed podcast episode purchased for only \$29 through the American Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute [self-study website](#). The podcast episodes are mobile friendly. Open your browser on your smartphone, tablet, or computer, Go to the MACPA and BLI self-study account, and listen to an episode. Take the review and final exam while you're working out or after listening to an episode on your commute to and from work - It's that easy! While all Improv is no Joke podcasts are available on my website, only those purchased through the MACPA and BLI self-study Web site are eligible for CPE credit. You can get detailed instructions by visiting my website at www.PeterMargaritis.com and clicking on the graphic "Improv is no Joke for CPE credit" on my home page. I hope you enjoy this exciting and flexible way of earning CPE credit. So with that, let's get to the interview with Karen.

Peter: [00:03:47] Karen first thank you so very much for taking time to be on my podcast. I am so looking forward to our discussion today.

Karen: [00:03:55] Oh Peter it's going to be great. Let's have some fun and have a good conversation.

Peter: [00:03:59] Oh I'm I'm sure we will. I will go out on a limb and say I almost guarantee they'll be laughter throughout this interview today.

Karen: [00:04:09] Oh good. I hope so. I hope so.

Peter: [00:04:11] Not to add that initial pressure on myself or yourself. But I'm sure between the two of us and our comedic backgrounds I'm sure laughter is out there. But before you get into any of that, can you give the audience your story? Who is Karen Eddington and what's she do?

Karen: [00:04:28] Right. So I am a researcher and a comedian. So basically I used my original data and comedy to teach the Under Pressure Project to audiences. And I do have a TEDx talk. My talk is called the connecting power of shared laughter, which kind of shows all of that. That's what I do. Are you ready for the backstory?

Peter: [00:04:51] Oh, let's go for it.

Karen: [00:04:52] OK here's the whole backstory. So I have been speaking since 2003 right out of college. I did a college capstone thesis on how we feel about ourselves and interviewed about 500 students, and I just started speaking from there just kind of get pulled in to share what I've learned along the way. And I decided at one point that I was going to try and be funny. Oh my goodness.

Peter: [00:05:15] Hahah.

Karen: [00:05:15] And I still remember it was a Women's Conference and I still remember like their blank stares because the very first thing I said was I'm going to tell you three things that are funny. And there were just crickets. It lit a fire because I just thought oh no this is not going well and I remember oh I remember trying to tell a joke about the drinking fountain trying to put your face in before you push the button and there were crickets again. Anyway it moved on and I did it and I I left thinking oh no how does this humor stuff work? How do you make people laugh? And from there I spent -- and I failed. I just felt I felt that bomb feeling of not letting it work. And so I spent about six years after that compiling jokes in notebooks and I would watch comedians on TV and any special I could and I had like massive piles of notebooks where I would hit the pause button and say What did they just do? Why was that funny? All while I was still speaking about my research. And I have this love of laughter. Like I love it. It's helped me get through some hard time. Sometimes I think that that laughter heals and strengthens us, when sometimes nothing else can. And so after a while I finally got the courage to go to a comedy club. I went to open mic night and I just remember thinking this is the scariest thing I've ever done in my life. Haha.

Peter: [00:06:43] Hahahah.

Karen: [00:06:43] I remember I did my set and the thing is nobody laughed.

Peter: [00:06:48] Yuuup.

Karen: [00:06:48] Except the drunk guy, and he actually he laughed at all the wrong time.

Peter: [00:06:53] Hahaha.

Karen: [00:06:53] So I remember once again like-- my husband went with me-- and we got in the car after and I said What am I doing? Why am I doing this? And you know it's funny is that living like my worst fear and living that failure is what gave me the courage to keep going. And what I did is I left. I just thought you know if this is my low, if I can survive this, I can survive this again. I left the shadow of the open mic nights and decided to do my own show. So I did. I rented out... well I didn't rent it out. I had a connection where I got in the auditorium at the high school and just called all my friends and family and said hey I'm going to be a comedian.

Peter: [00:07:36] Haha!

Karen: [00:07:37] So I need your support. And they showed up and they supported me and we had some laughs. Granted it was a little bit bumpy but I started doing my own shows. So along the way I'd done all of my research. I picked up another research project called the Under Pressure Project. This was about nine years ago and this is a lot of information. We'll catch up to the future here in just a second.

Peter: [00:08:04] No worries.

Karen: [00:08:04] Okay good. I wanted to know the biggest pressure, and it started with students, that students were facing, and I wanted to know more specifically their solutions that they had to get through. And I ended up with a massive pile of about 500 surveys that had open-ended questions on them. And so here I was, I'm a researcher, I'm looking at this information, I'm trying to find patterns. So I just started looking at what they had said and their responses. And it ended up that their biggest pressure-- I know they said things like peer pressure and drug abuse and other such things. But their biggest pressure was achievement based, and this fascinates me because it's so applicable to all of us today, even. But their biggest solution for getting through is to develop a support network. So this is actually significant. This is about eight years ago. Very significant because I can't stop looking for patterns. All while I'm doing my comedy on the side, I'm looking for patterns in my professional networking meetings. I'm looking for patterns in neighborhoods and gossip and all these things. And I started to see one common thing in every one of those situations with adults, And then back to the students, and I went back to the Under Pressure project and I noticed something: that there was one thing that we all had in common, and I call it the most probably universal and dangerous experience we can have and that is mental isolation: The times we feel alone in our mind; somehow we're diminished, flawed, or excluded. And so this now is kind of the Under Pressure project. As time has gone on and I've kind of figured out comedy a bit, I've been able to combine it. I've been able to bring in comedy to help us heal pressure, but right now I function under the under pressure project and so we heal pressures within comedy, but we also your mental isolation: helping people not feel so alone; Helping people feel like they're part of a community. So that gives you a lot of information to work with, but that is kind of the rundown of what I've done.

Peter: [00:10:16] Wow wow wow, again.

Karen: [00:10:23] I'm tired. I've been busy and I'm tired. Hahaha.

Peter: [00:10:24] I'm exhausted! What are you, the Energizer Bunny? But I have met you, as I told everybody, and you did a wonderful session on misdirection at NSA influence and breakout sessions. So you are funny, and to even do a breakout session at NSA on the topic of funny, and before you started you had some heavy hitters in that room and I'm going I'm not sure I'd be able to stand up there with them in the audience critiquing me. But you're smart. You recruited them to help be part of your presentation, which I thought was absolutely brilliant.

Karen: [00:11:02] Oh, thanks, yeah. It's all about creating a community. And I'm not going to lie: my knees were shaking a little bit. I was nervous but it felt right and it felt good and I loved it. Let's share. Let's create a community.

Peter: [00:11:15] I love the concept of creating that community to help deliver information, but I'm also now thinking about this Under Pressure project. You said the one thing that we all share is that isolation time and I had.

Karen: [00:11:30] Right. Well have you ever been surrounded by people and still felt alone, or even-- I've been to like my NSA chapter meeting before and you walk into that room and people are putting on their best, like they got their smiles and they're like hi how are you. I'm successful. And sometimes we're not talking about the real things. We're not talking about, oh I don't know, the struggles, our fears, our failure, our efforts. And so that's kind of where the mental isolation comes in. Sometimes we're in those professional moments and we still feel somehow like we're alone. We're around all these people but somehow we're still somehow diminished, flawed, or excluded, and that's where that idea comes in because it's a universal experience.

Peter: [00:12:24] So this question: Did you attend the gala at NSA?

Karen: [00:12:31] No, I wasn't at that one, but I've been to them before.

Peter: [00:12:34] So to make sure I understand... because I walk into-- I've gotten much more comfortable with my chapter. But when I walk into national I think I'm experiencing this vulnerability that you know... everybody's smiling and we know a lot of people and you know you might be kind of new, but Oh Bruce... he got inducted into the Hall of Fame and his acceptance speech was about not about him, but about everybody in the audience, and it kind of took a little bit of a key from Marilyn Sherman about you know the leadership in the front row that basically you all can do this - you just need some help. You need in essence to kind of build that community, but you need to come up here in front; you to introduce yourself, and not be intimidated. Which I thought was a really interesting message because I believe I'm not the only one there that's feeling this. And I assume a lot of other newbies per se... You know we put on a good face but that talk that's in our head-- the fears and everything that's going on. I'm not... I don't... and I've been to about four or five conventions. I don't think that's really, to any depth, being addressed .

Karen: [00:13:57] Yeah. I think that's why we need to talk about more, and I live talking-- and I love what you said: you need to make the same effort and not be intimidated. Because somebody just sharing that with us that juices have that mental isolation, But I also love combating this using kind of a laughter approach. I call it shared laughter. It's those moments where we're connected together like if you can do it, I can do. And to me that's what shared

laughter is: it's just any moment where we're connecting as humans and we're chuckling together, we're connecting together, and like you can do it and I can do it because you can do it -- you know it's just that connected feeling. So I don't know that's just another thought for you.

Peter: [00:14:37] So how do you how do you get the shared laughter? Is it you get the shared laughter within the community that you build and you use laughter to help deal with some of these fears and demons and things are going on?

Karen: [00:14:50] Yes! So I can give you some examples. So I have a friend... I feel so connected every time I think of this story. I have a friend who was at a really high end party and she dished up this beautiful piece of cheesecake. She loves cheesecake. But there were a dozen people all around her too and she went and took a bite and discovered that it was Brie. It was like pungent cheese and it wasn't what she was expecting it to be. And I love it because she kept telling me how she felt in this moment, and to me this is what shared laughter is. Like I ate the whole thing so that everyone in the room thought that's what I meant to do.

Peter: [00:15:31] Haha.

Karen: [00:15:31] And I asked like did you even get a cracker? And she said I didn't even wash it down with a cracker! And to me it's about connecting over like our flaws or our fears or our failure or our effort. But those times those things aren't going right, or the times we're working through things. So to me that's what shared laughter is: it's sitting down and being a little more open with someone about some of the things that you're experiencing, that you're feeling, so that you don't feel quite so alone; you feel like you can do this. Because if I go back to that Under Pressure project, you realize that that solution really... if you develop a support network, that is one of the top things that can pull you through. I love having that support network, or people who are connected and saying if you can do it, I can do it. I'm repeating it, but it's so important: if you can do it, I can do it.

Peter: [00:16:27] So in this shared laughter, when you told the story the first time you did stand up and you are crickets.

Karen: [00:16:34] Oh yeah!

Peter: [00:16:36] We shared in that laughter because I remember the first time I did it and I heard crickets as well. And I remember getting off the stage going Why did I ever want to even think about doing this? This is insane.

Karen: [00:16:51] Oh no! Hahaha. Yes!

Peter: [00:16:51] But then the next day I went, heck, I'm gonna go try it again!

Karen: [00:16:55] Yes!

Peter: [00:16:55] And I'm not going... I'm not gonna let this defeat me. And I still heard crickets again. But I do applaud you, to kind of back up for a sec. I do applaud you for the study in comedy that you have done is to take jokes, Break them down, and see what is similar: looking for those patterns. I think that's one of the reasons why your session went so well, and I think

just for anybody. I sometimes-- I don't even think about patterns and this conversation has made me stop and think I need to start looking at more patterns to look for that commonality. But that's not part of my DNA. But I need to turn that into part of my DNA. So I... you are a researcher. By far, you are a better researcher than I could ever think about being.

Karen: [00:17:49] Well I think that's good, and that's why we can make good teams in the world here because I sometimes feel like I'm very good at like being on the spot funny, like with improv. I've learned so much from improv as well. So anytime I see someone going through that like it's cool to share in each other's strength. But I've learned I learn what makes someone laugh, and one of the biggest kickers for me that turned things around at the Comedy Club is understanding what misdirection is. Like you can't just get up there and be sarcastic and be like I hate cheese or whatever - you need to apply like a technique to it. And once I figured out the technique, it changed everything. But for me, misdirection is about the ability to provide like this thought-shifting experience for your audience in the clearest words possible. So really what we're doing is just... we're creating a diversion, like we're actually like crafting this experience, sometimes in sentences, like using assumptions or giving the wrong answer, to lead people to think one thing when you really know you're going to kind of share something different. And once I started doing that with jokes, it made a difference. So I'm a mom comedian. Let me see if I got an example off the top of my head... This is one of my favorites, just because it's my life. I have three kids. So but like before I had kids I could actually go on vacation. Now I have to pack for five people, and that's just one to go to the post office.

Peter: [00:19:16] Hahaha.

Karen: [00:19:16] And we're analyzing humor, again, but it's hard to laugh when you're analyzing it, but what I do is I... and it's easier to write backwards. If I knew I knew I was packing -- and that goes on and more tags and such to it -- But if I knew where I was going with it, it was so much easier to work backwards and write this assumption like we're going on vacation, when really I'm surprising them. So once I figured out misdirection, it changed so much for me and it made all the difference to realize that there's this technique to it and I loved it.

Peter: [00:19:48] Yeah I do love misdirection, and you taught the the the rule of threes, which is a very powerful way and in misdirection, which got me to think one day I said the one thing that we all have in common is that we all have a brain, and our brains are made up of neurons protons and morons.

Karen: [00:20:11] Hahahaha. Good.

Peter: [00:20:11] So you know but it's another one of those things I think you know whether you are a speaker or not or you want to be a presenter, because humor goes a long way and making people connecting with people making people laugh. It stimulates the brain. It helps us to remember things. I think the more that we can use humor, the more likelihood that whatever message we are trying to deliver will stick. And your core... and we're talking you know there's a difference between humor and jokes. I look at a joke as a priest a rabbi and Bill Clinton walk into a bar. You're offending the priests and the rabbis here, and humor it's it's a lot of-- especially if it's self-deprecating, goes a long way in helping people remember. So you can take any topic out there, and if you can free some type of humor around, the likelihood people will remember dramatically increases. And to your to other point that you said humor does help relieve stress.

There is health benefits in humor. I mean when I think about the movie that was based on real life experience: Patch Adams that Robin Williams starred in. Humor heals.

Karen: [00:21:31] Right. Well I just think humor also helps us snap present. You have to be present to laugh and we're not off wandering. Sometimes I think when we're under so much pressure too, as our minds are everywhere. We've got this worry grating on us, but if we're laughing it snaps us present, and sometimes it can take you out of yourself. Kind of like watching a movie like when you're going to the movie theater you take a break for a minute. And so when you laugh you're taking a break and you're laughing, it makes a big difference. Like you said, it helps people remember things. But it also provides this experience for where we could take a break and we're also present. So it's good stuff.

Peter: [00:22:10] OK so you're using the word present. Now let me go back to you say you've done improv and you know that I've done some improv.

Karen: [00:22:16] Yeah.

Peter: [00:22:17] So what have you learned from improv that that helps in this situation?

Karen: [00:22:21] Oh it's so good! OK. I was saying earlier I know spur of the moment isn't necessarily one of my stronger talents. I usually can't. I usually have to write them in it before a joke will come out. So I took part of kind of the experience. After the comedy club I started taking improv classes and I loved it. Oh I loved it so much because I learned I learned-- I learned to chill out.

Peter: [00:22:46] Hahaha.

Karen: [00:22:46] I learned that I have time when I'm on stage. You know how if you're ever on stage speaking it's like one second is like 30 seconds in your mind. Now there's this time change. I've learned that I have time on stage. One of the things that I love most about improv was the line games. So basically they would have everyone doing it line up in one line, and they would throw out a scenario like Hey waiter like Hey waiter there's something in our soup and you have to come by, on the spot, write a joke about what's in the soup. And they said-- they take suggestions from the audience, so they would shout out like a shoe. And so what they taught me was to list build and that has made all the difference. I know it's just gathering data, but I feel like one of my most powerful creative skills, especially when I'm doing comedy, is the ability to lift; the ability to make some connections here. So even done like you said... they said shoe and I just think about all the things that are associated with shoes like laces smells bowling soles. Like I just go through those things. And so when they do we'll do a Hey waiter joke like I would stand up there and say oh I'm so sorry from the bottom of my soul.

Peter: [00:24:02] Awww.

Karen: [00:24:02] And that is a bad joke. Oh, I got an aww. Really like it's not a great joke. Haha. But one of the things I also learned was how to stand onstage and love what you are doing. If you... and you say that line with confidence, like I'm sorry from the bottom of my soul. If you can just stand up there and love what you are doing, the audience will love what you... too . And that helped me get over like my bad jokes or my fear of like what is this... Is it going to turn

out right? Because I've learned sometimes our crowd doesn't laugh for a couple of reasons. They don't laugh if they're worried for you. You have to show them you belong on stage, and you have to love your bad jokes. And you can use saver lines to show them they're OK, even if they're not laughing because crowds-- I feel like they respond to confidence. And if you're-- sometimes if you're your unaddressed insecurities make an audience want to protect you and not laugh with you. So if you can address those with some confidence, it makes a big difference. So there's one I'm sure I just talked a lot. What do you...

Peter: [00:25:13] I love the concept of you know the ability to think on your feet within probability, accept what the other person says, and add on to it - the concept of yes and. You were talking about presence but I think through all of that the one thing that's taught me is, more than anything else, is about listening.

Karen: [00:25:34] Ohhh Good. That's good.

Peter: [00:25:36] Listening to what the other person says, and then having a little pause or moment just to process and then either asking the question, pushing the conversation forward, but not using these words of But and No because those just evoke emotion, and then things get derailed. But if we accept somebody's idea and built onto it, you never know what will happen with it, and that's the whole you know the Hey waiter there's a shoe in my soup. And the person who might be the second person to follow up on that has to accept there's a shoe in the soup and go through very rapidly through a list and go well just don't get the laces stuck in your teeth and you'll be ok.

Karen: [00:26:18] Ahah! Or that stinks. That's another one for you.

Peter: [00:26:22] Oh Yeah. Or don't let the odor eaters eat your soup. So I mean there's just millions of them. But yeah it-- But it also taught me and you said this It's OK to fail, because we we do fail. We tell a bad joke, we tell a bad analogy, that's OK. It is not life or death. There are saver lines or like you know that really sounded great in my head or my dogs laughed at it or whatever, and just move forward and be fearless.

Karen: [00:26:54] And that's such a key because I've seen I've seen speakers on stage before where like everything went wrong technically, like their AV went out, and the way that they handled failure was the funniest thing I have ever seen. Because of that that fearless feeling, like I'm OK up here and let's have fun up here and that feeling is so fun. Even when you're in an audience that you see all these things going on, but like it creates this experience you have together. But like failure... I even think of like Johnny Carson when his jokes when it hit. Or even when I see Jimmy Fallon sometimes too. Like if they don't hit... their confidence and their fearlessness make it so it's still like one of the coolest jokes of the night by the way they handle it. So I love that. That helps us get over fear like if you're OK on stage, the audience is ok, and they'll laugh at you and have fun with you.

Peter: [00:27:50] Yes. So you also said something that once you start taking improv you began to chill out.

Karen: [00:27:58] Yes! hahah.

Peter: [00:27:59] I've taken a lot of classes. I continue when I get a chance to go to Chicago Second City take take more classes, but the more that I've applied improv principles into my life... I'm not under as much pressure -- to tie this back to your project -- as I was prior to... because I used to get upset at things that I would have no control over. And I learned through improv... improv provides clarity in very chaotic situations. And I look at those chaotic situations... are those things I can't control? So I don't get worried about them anymore. Like why my plane has been diverted to Baltimore from D.C. I have no control over that. So I'm not going get upset about that. I'm going to find a solution and move forward.

Karen: [00:28:44] Good. Oh that's good stuff. I feel like I should be taking notes right now. hahah. This is like a rich conversation. I like it.

Peter: [00:28:53] And you know the example I share with audiences about my mother, and I know she'll probably listen as podcast, I'm sorry. There was a time we were driving in South Florida and we get stuck in a traffic jam and we had to be somewhere. And my sweet little mother turned into the salty mouth sailor, and I went Ma what what what what what did you learn those words from? She said Well you taught me... well She was probably right about that.

Karen: [00:29:18] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:29:18] But why are you losing your mind? We can't go forward, we can't go back. We have a cell phone. We'll call and tell them we're late. But there's no reason to get upset about it. And you know she said Well how did you become so smart? I kind of told her about the improv and this is part of my my book coming out, and I said mom what so you can say we never talk. So let's have a conversation. OK you might be right Son, what you want to talk about? I said can you loan me ten thousand dollars?

Karen: [00:29:49] Hahaha.

Peter: [00:29:49] That wasn't what she wanted to hear but it made her laugh. But I think we get caught up part of this under this pressure because we focus on things that we have no control over that drive us insane. If we just focus on the things that we do have control over... and that's what improv has taught me.

Karen: [00:30:07] Yes I like that a lot. It reminded me. I don't know if -- this is a whole different experience but I think about like work life balance situations too. And the more pressure that we go through and how you apply to our everyday life. So I think work life balance is kind of funny. I think it's like walking a tightrope over boiling lava because there's no there's no survival. You just.. there's no balance - you just survive. There was one time I was asked to do a radio show interview on a day my kids were home from school and I thought you know what? We're going to make a day of this. I'm going to have fun. I'm going to be with my family and be a professional at the same time. And so by the time I loaded everyone in the car we stopped, we had to find someone's shoe, I had to get someone to the bathroom, but by then we lost another shoe... and we get to the car, And by this time go the bathroom but we don't stop we've got to keep going - we've got to go on the road! So we get on the road and at the time she was six years old and I like to call her rainbow bright she's sparkly. She threw up. She got carsick and threw up all over the back seat while I was trying to get to this radio show interview. So we veered through like four lanes, we were in the carpool lane -- Obviously we qualified -- and we zoomed over and we

went into Target. And I thought OK. And I realized at the same time that I had forgotten the stroller and my little... he was two at the time. We'd like to call him the flying squirrel because he must be contained at all times. So my little flying squirrel I realized we need to get a stroller. I thought this is a solution. We can do this. I can't control all this, but we can do this. I kind of mindset that I'm trying to survive this terrible ordeal. So we clean up the back of the car. Use anything I can find. I grab like an old insurance card because that's what I've got the glove box. We clean up. We go inside and we buy the stroller, buy new clothes. We get back to the car. I realize we left the car door open the whole entire time.

Peter: [00:32:09] Hahahaha!

Karen: [00:32:12] And so... I was worried but I realized fast that it was a pretty good theft deterrent having vomit in the air.

Peter: [00:32:21] Hahahah.

Karen: [00:32:22] I'm just glad we could air out the car. And so anyway I ended up getting lost on the way to the babysitter. I end up getting to my radio show interview and I'm a professional the whole time, and I've got all this pressure because I got my family thoughts are going everywhere. But I tell you I navigated that interview like Michael Phelps going for his 18th gold medal. I focused! I focused during that, and then when I was done I thought this is all downhill from here. This is just day in the life over here. Dealing with our stress everyday, trying to laughter and survive. I realized... but we got back in the car. I took the kids to the mall and I thought it's all downhill from here. We're going to go to the LEGO store and we go to get out the stroller. I realize it had zip ties so I'm calling for help. Anywhere I can please anyone anyone can cut off the zip ties and no one could, and my flying squirrel's running all throughout the parking lot. Rainbow Bright's like ohhh sparkly and I'm just panicked. So I grab all three of the kids, we go in, and I can't get the zip ties off. By the time we finally do, the stroller had no front wheels... and so it's just one of those days where it was one thing after another after another, and I realized like we just walked the flying squirrel in the stroller, and we popped a wheelie because the back wheels are on, through the mall, and at this point I get a client phone call, but to me I have to let it go because in these moments I have to have the same focus.

Peter: [00:33:53] Right.

Karen: [00:33:54] As when I navigate that interview. So anyway. It's just one of those days where everything goes wrong. But I love how I look back on it and I can pull out the humor, and it was stressful at the time but I think we can survive with focus and humor. So that was a long story but it's it's a good one, and a good bad one. Hahah. Yep. The day we are strong with no wheels.

Peter: [00:34:21] Haha. That's a fascinating story. I'm sitting there going. So by the end of the day after day like that the only way to really unwind was with wine, or some type of adult beverage.

Karen: [00:34:36] There you go. I actually don't drink so I swallow it down with some water or chocolate. But, Yes, that is definitely the way people think. Like, phew, We've got to unwind after this. Yes.

Peter: [00:34:49] Well in that story you said a couple of things. You said focus, and the ability to be focused, present, in the moment, all the time listening to the environment around you, really helped you not freak out and panic. Because I think a lot of people would. I think some people would even say I can't do the interview now. This is just way too much for me to handle. And I give you a lot of kudos for being able to compartmentalize, separate, and then get to the interview and be not worried about what just happened, not worried about the vomit, and all of that, and sit there and do the interview very professionally. And then when it's all said and done... okay, got to go back to that other type of reality that I'm dealing with that you know... And then I have to get over those other hurdles.

Karen: [00:35:43] Thanks, and if I can add something back to this concept of shared laughter. How we're only like smiling around people and putting on our perfect front. When I was actually in the interview, I brought it up because sometimes... Sometimes I think we need to connect more over, I keep saying, our flaws, our fears, our failures, our effort - the things that are going wrong. And sometimes I think we're going to have to be mindful about bringing family into professional environments, but I think it's about being a little more honest and up front about some of our struggles. Because when I was in that interview I talked about it and said Hey guess what just happened. My life's not perfect. I think sometimes you put on these kind of perfect fronts. I like to say that I come from a perfect family, and by perfect I mean we all have a therapist. Like I've inherited anxiety, and I think sometimes when we have these atmospheres it just puts us up for more pressure. And so I love when we can just relax a little bit more and be real and share glimpses of the things that go on in our lives that are real. Because if I can do it you can do it, and if you can do it, I can do it.

Peter: [00:36:52] Well people-- I think people are afraid to be vulnerable, for whatever it is, and you know it's maybe the Facebook Effect. Somebody has recently told me of The Facebook Effect, that Everybody's got this hunky dory great life and nobody's talking about the other stuff that's going on. So it's that... that perennial always going on that same first day, because remember the first date we never talked about anything until we get later.

Karen: [00:37:23] Yeah, Yup.

Peter: [00:37:24] I think those of those of us who can be vulnerable to accept our our fears and our failures, and share them in a way that doesn't bring everybody down, But share it in a way that you know I'm not like I said I'm not perfect... and just in that essence everybody in the audience goes well if she's not perfect, and after they hear the story, everybody can relate to it. I think you become much more relatable when you are more vulnerable with your audience.

Karen: [00:37:56] That was well said. I like that. I like that. And I think boundaries are also really important as well because just because someone says How are you doesn't mean we should emotionally overload them.

Peter: [00:38:07] Haha!

Karen: [00:38:09] Well sometimes we like to use How are you with like a greeting. We don't even answer it. You know we never respond to that question fully. And I think it's ok to know that that question how are you Sometimes is used as a greeting and it doesn't mean you need to

like... have poor boundaries. But yeah I think it's OK sometimes to show glimpses because we share like our most tender things with people who are honest; people who show that they've earned the right to hear from you, and that's OK, but sometimes it's OK to show glimpses of that day. You know you were late and they threw up in the car and it just was a bad day. I think it's OK to show glimpses of those things because it does make us real. So yes.

Peter: [00:38:57] Yeah I agree and I agree with the boundaries. I mean there's just some things that should be kept within those boundaries and shouldn't be shared. And there are some people who like to share everything, and you know there's there's a balance. There's always a balance in all of this. I think in the right setting with the right story and showing the vulnerability, I believe it helps with connecting to whatever audience you're speaking to, and this audience can be family. It could be an event. It could be on a phone call. I think it goes a long long long way of helping connect with somebody else. I think that's a big challenge that we all have in business today is how do we connect? How do we emotionally connect with somebody else? Because we do business with people that we trust. We don't do business with people that we don't trust.

Karen: [00:39:52] Yes.

Peter: [00:39:52] And there's a whole aspect there of you know I think you share you and you connect with someone and you build that relationship, you build that trust. And everything value is built on trust, According to David Horsager, who spoke at the NSA influence session, and he was the one who wrote Trust Edge.

Karen: [00:40:16] Oh yes.

Peter: [00:40:17] It helps in building that level of trust, and as long as we have that trust we can accomplish anything. But the crazy thing is it's so hard to build trust, but it's so easy to lose that right.

Karen: [00:40:32] Right. And to me it's a lifelong process, like all of this. All of this is what we talked about today. Laughter, dealing with our pressures, building trust, being vulnerable, understanding our boundaries... like this isn't just like a one time magic thing that we're going to figure out. It's a life long process, but it's OK to know that we figure this out as we go, and we do our best, and that's good.

Peter: [00:40:58] That is good. And to that effect of thinking about you know... we've never... we met face to face at NSA, but prior to that we didn't know each other and you asked the question... before we got started we were talking but I told you I knew Rick Roberts, who you knew, so just that one person helped increase that level of trust on both ends.

Karen: [00:41:24] Right! Yeah.

Peter: [00:41:27] Exactly. And after that session ended I believe I gave you my business card and said I'd love to talk to you at some time, and maybe by on my podcast. And you had agreed. I'm not sure if that would happen if there wasn't some person or persons in the room that could validate my credibility, in order to have something done, and to take this along those lines: The more we meet people, the more we network, helps with all of that. And humor helps

in that connection, and when we're talking about shared laughter and community it helps build up our own community, our own therapy group, per se.

Karen: [00:42:06] Hahaha. Yes. Firends, with boundaries.

Peter: [00:42:11] I love that: friends with boundaries. How can how can they find you? How can they contact you?

Karen: [00:42:21] Easy enough. I'm located at KarenEddington.com. My TED talks right there on the home page as well. Or e-mail. You can e-mail me at Karen@KarenEddington.com. Reach out. I love to connect with people! So that's great.

Peter: [00:42:36] I will put that information in the show notes as well as links to your Web site and to your TED talk. Karen I can't thank you enough for taking time. I've had an absolute blast. I've learned a lot more than I had anticipated on learning from you, and I greatly appreciate you sharing your knowledge with me and my audience.

Karen: [00:42:58] Oh good you're so welcome. I took notes myself. We thought this would be funny, but I thought woah this actually kind of even went to some good information so I might have to re-listen to the podcast and take a whole page of notes. So I'm so delighted to connect with you here. So thank you so much. Appreciate it.

Peter: [00:43:18] You're welcome. And I will try to get you up on a future episode and we can go through a discussion on the techniques of misdirection. We just kind of just touched the top of it, But I'd love for you to share some of those techniques with my audience so they can build more humor into their presentations.

Karen: [00:43:39] Great. Great, we can do that.

Peter: [00:43:41] Thank you again so very much, and go see if you can rustle those three kids down and keep them all in one spot.

Karen: [00:43:50] OK. haha. Have a great day!

Peter: [00:43:55] I would like to thank Karen again for being a guest today and discussing how to better deal with pressure. She gave some great tips and helping us to manage that pressure and create a shared laughter. If you've been listening lately, you know that I have partnered with the Maryland Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute to bring [an exciting new learning opportunity for accounting professionals to earn CPE credits](#). You can earn up to one CPE credit for each completed podcast episode purchased for only \$29 through the American Association of CPAs and the Business Learning Institute [self-study website](#). The podcast episodes are mobile friendly. Open your browser on your smartphone, tablet, or computer, Go to the MACPA and BLI self-study account, and listen to an episode. Take the review and final exam while you're working out or after listening to an episode on your commute to and from work - It's that easy! While all Improv is no Joke podcasts are available on my website, only those purchased through the MACPA and BLI self-study Web site are eligible for CPE credit. You can get detailed instructions by visiting my website at www.PeterMargaritis.com and clicking on the graphic "Improv is no Joke for CPE credit" on my home page. I hope you enjoy

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