

Stephanie Feger: [00:00:00] Being vulnerable and sharing elements of who you are in ways that other people are kind of scared to, it allows you to realize how interconnected we are and how important your mindset shift is to help you find fulfillment in life.

Peter Margaritis: [00:00:23] Welcome to Change Your Mindset Podcast, formerly known as Improv is No Joke, where it's all about believing that strong communication skills are the best way in delivering your technical accounting knowledge and growing your business. An effective way of building stronger communication skills is by embracing the principles of applied improvisation.

Peter Margaritis: [00:00:43] Your host is Peter Margaritis, CPA, a.k.a. The Accidental Accountant, and he will interview financial professionals and business leaders to find their secret in building stronger relationships with their clients, customers, associates, and peers, all the while growing their businesses. So, let's start the show.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:11] Happy Holidays, and welcome to Episode 17. And my guest today is Stephanie Feger, who is a passionate communicator who believes that a shift in perspective can help people live truly fulfilling lives. After working in the public relations and marketing industry for over 15 years, she learned that happiness isn't found on what society deems important and felt a calling to help others reach their fullest potential while embracing all that life has to offer.

Peter Margaritis: [00:01:42] In her recently published book, Color Today Pretty: An Inspirational Guide to Living a Life in Perspective, Stephanie invites others to change their lives by using her guide to finding perspective from within. Now, an author, professional speaker, motivational blogger, book publicist, and home decor business owner, Stephanie connects her passion for embracing creativity with her dedication to helping others live life in perspective.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:14] She's a Louisville native, and lives with her husband, Cory, and their three kids, Eli, Lyndi, and Luke. To learn more about Stephanie, go to www.ColorTodayPretty.com. She has a wonderful message to share with all of us as we begin to move into 2019, and for those in the accounting profession as we move into

that busy time of year, a busy season. But I like to prefer to call it, you know, that opportunity season that awaits us.

Peter Margaritis: [00:02:43] Before we get to the interview, I received an Amazon book review from Douglas Warren, who is the CEO of Warren Jackson CPAs in Sweetwater, Tennessee. He writes, "Peter does an outstanding job demonstrating how to present numbers to a non-number audience. It is useful information that can be used in any presentation. It can help make the presenter look like a rock star. I highly recommend this book for anyone who presents financial data and wants to make it interesting and relative to their audience, whomever they may be. I've already used many of the insights in his book." Doug, thank you so very much for the book review, and I'm glad that you found some tips and techniques to make the numbers interesting; as well as your purchase of 10 additional copies for your team and for some of your clients. Thank you again, Doug.

Peter Margaritis: [00:03:37] Taking the Numb Out of Numbers will transform your ability to communicate technical financial information in greater contexts through analogies, metaphors, and storytelling. Put another way, translate complex financial information into plain English, so your audience will gain a deeper understanding. The book is available on Amazon.com, in paperback, and in Kindle. So, stop what you're doing, immediately stop right now, and go buy it today. If you'd like to purchase 10 or more copies, please contact me at Peter@PeterMargaritis.com for bulk discounts. So, without further ado, let's get to the interview with Stephanie Feger.

Peter Margaritis: [00:04:21] Everybody, I'm with Stephanie Feger, a fellow Kentuckian, better yet a fellow UK fan. So, we've spent, I don't know, about 10 minutes even before we started the podcast talking about, "Oh, that was Duke game..." So, let's just move forward past that.

Stephanie Feger: [00:04:41] Yeah, we ignore that one.

Peter Margaritis: [00:04:42] Yeah, yeah. Let's just kind of ignore it. So, that's a learning curve. That's a learning curve.

Stephanie Feger: [00:04:47] Totally.

Peter Margaritis: [00:04:48] Stephanie, I thank you for taking time out of your schedule to be on my podcast. We've had a couple of health issues between the two of us, had to postpone this. But, finally, we're together. Looking forward to our conversation. Welcome.

Stephanie Feger: [00:05:01] Thank you so much. And, hey, I'd love to be with another Kentuckian. The problem is you don't have the accent, and I'm stuck with it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:08] No, I have the accent, but since I've been in Ohio, it takes just a sip of bourbon. And I'll tell you what, it'll come right out.

Stephanie Feger: [00:05:16] Oh, I see.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:17] Yeah, I know I-

Stephanie Feger: [00:05:18] We should have this all prepped with some bourbon next time.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:22] Next time. Next time, maybe so. But every now and then, it will slip out even without the enhancement of some bourbon. But I do know how to say the city that you live in, Louisville.

Stephanie Feger: [00:05:36] Good. Yes, I always say you got to a -- I make a joke. I'm like, "We don't have a lot of money here. We just slur words because every word costs more. So, we just, "Louisville," just roll it together.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:46] Louisville. Somebody said, just throw a bunch of marbles in your mouth and say Louisville. That's that.

Stephanie Feger: [00:05:50] That's perfect.

Peter Margaritis: [00:05:50] That's perfect. Stephanie, give the audience a little bit of an idea of your background.

Stephanie Feger: [00:05:56] Sure, sure. So, I, actually, have about 15 plus years of experience in marketing and communications. And I've absolutely loved that profession; although, I was telling you a little bit earlier that my dream was always to go into theater. So, it's been interesting because I feel like I have the opportunity to kind of merge that, and doing PR marketing has a little theatrical elements too, but I did that for about 15 years.

Stephanie Feger: [00:06:21] But something within me didn't feel like settled. There was something more I was supposed to do. I think many of us go through that in our life where you think you've hit your -- you know, where your success track is taking; and you feel all great; and you know if you keep going, you're going to reach where you want to go. And I was there, but there was something within saying, "Stephanie, nope, you're not doing what I need you to do. There's more to do."

Stephanie Feger: [00:06:45] And at that point, I started to really listen to where I needed to go, and I found myself shifting a bit. And I've started to realize that I needed to put my perspective lens on to see that. And it's just interesting how that evolved because it turned into me actually writing a book, and it's been published here in the past few months. And, now, I'm doing professional speaking and marketing communications consulting. And Peter, I would never have thought I'd be here. So, you call yourself The Accidental Accountant. I'm the Accidental Author. It's been an amazing journey.

Peter Margaritis: [00:07:19] Yeah. And the first time I met Stephanie, we had the same book coach. And her book was getting ready to come out, and she did this marketing presentation on a webcast that Cathy Fyock, our book coach, was having, and I'm going, "Oh my god." And I screenshot a bunch of your slides.

Stephanie Feger: [00:07:38] I love your heart. I could have just emailed them to you, my friend.

Peter Margaritis: [00:07:41] I know. I know, but, literally, I screenshot them because they were so good. And this is my second go round with the book. So, I knew some stuff, but some of the stuff that you're bringing to the table, oh, this is really, really good. So, yeah, I would screenshot. I screenshot it and just use it.

Stephanie Feger: [00:07:59] Thank you.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:00] Yeah. I thought I'd say that. I just remembered that this morning. I said, "I think I should probably let you know that."

Stephanie Feger: [00:08:04] That's really awesome. That's really awesome. It just goes to show that we never know the impact or what we can do to help other people. And so, you should always put yourself out there because you have the potential to continue to help other people in ways you would never have dreamed possible. So, that's awesome.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:20] You're welcome. And you just said something, put yourself out there. That's not easy to do.

Stephanie Feger: [00:08:26] No. It's actually very scary. Very scary. But here I was, you know, working in a corporate world, and doing everything you're supposed to, but something within me felt like I needed to be putting myself out there and be vulnerable. And I found that in being vulnerable and sharing elements of who you are in ways that other people are kind of scared to, it allows you to realize how interconnected we are and how important your mindset shift is to help you find fulfillment in life. Not to talk too much in the clouds but you know.

Peter Margaritis: [00:08:58] Yeah. It's really scary for some. I think, it's just the pure fear of failure that if I am vulnerable, they'll see my weaknesses. But, you know, I was talking to a friend of mine, Merle Heckman, who I've interviewed before on this podcast,

and he goes, "Pete, I love to listen to people when they tell me their faults, when they tell me they're failures, when they tell me their losses because you learn so much more by learning that than ones who never share that information at all because they're afraid to share that."

Stephanie Feger: [00:09:37] You know, it's funny you say that. I wrote a blog recently on how to manage panic, you know. What are things in life that you could do to kind of help you take a look at the scary things and manage it? And one of the things, and you just touched on it, that I use is kind of what I call my tried and true. Stephanie's Tried and True Panic Tips.

Stephanie Feger: [00:09:57] One of them is actually totally against what most people who know me would think I would be. So, I'm a very positive person, very much an optimist, but one thing I do when I get in a panic situation, or I feel vulnerable, or I get nervous, or things are scary is I like to look at the worst-case scenario first. I actually believe that for me, and I'm thinking about this when you're talking about it being terrifying to put yourself out there, I like to, when I come up to a situation that makes me extremely nervous or panicky, think what's the worst thing that could happen.

Stephanie Feger: [00:10:28] So, what's the worst thing about putting yourself out there? Okay, failing. Well, let's be real. Many times, when we fail, we learn from that, and we actually grow and soar in ways we never could have if we hadn't failed in the first place. Or, for me, you know, what's the worst thing if you stand up for something you believe in, or if you say something to your boss, or, you know, you make a financial decision that is a big one, right? What are some of the worst things that could happen?

Stephanie Feger: [00:10:55] And I find, for me, that the things that I think are really, really bad, when I acknowledge and own them, they are really not so bad after all. And, actually, many times, I'm like, "Okay. Well, if that's what happens, I can pick up and move on from it." So, I believe in kind of accepting that worst-case scenario and running with it. And I feel that way in putting yourself out there. What's the worst that can happen? Someone thinks you're crazy, or someone thinks you're different, or you fail in front of someone. And I really don't think that's all that bad a thing.

Peter Margaritis: [00:11:22] It's not. It's funny you should mention that blog because that was one of the questions that I had in my head that I was going to ask because I read it, and it just came out it. I'm like-

Stephanie Feger: [00:11:32] That's awesome, yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:11:32] I read it two days ago, and I love what you had to say, but I'm going to word this a little bit differently.

Stephanie Feger: [00:11:37] Sure.

Peter Margaritis: [00:11:39] Because of your background in theater, and you said that you've done improv, this whole, you know, what's the worst thing that could happen, it's that leaning into the fear. It's taking on that risk to know that everything is going to be okay when it comes, too, at the other end, and I will have learned a lot.

Peter Margaritis: [00:11:57] I equate that to the things I've learned through improv because, yeah, you just lean into it. You go, and you go right through it. They also use that as a brainstorming tool. If you're trying to figure out how do we grow sales, well, how could I kill sales? What's the worst idea ever that I could use to kill my sales? And you'll end up finding ways to grow sales quicker than-

Stephanie Feger: [00:12:24] Exactly.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:25] Yeah, cool.

Stephanie Feger: [00:12:27] Exactly.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:28] Let's talk about this book.

Stephanie Feger: [00:12:31] Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: [00:12:31] Color Today Pretty. How did you come up with the title?

Stephanie Feger: [00:12:35] Oh my gosh. Well, that is a story that I must share because I believe that the best things for me, when I get like those brilliant moments in life, it happens in like one of three ways. I'm either in the shower, I'm driving down the road, or I'm sleeping. It's the weirdest thing. Like no joke, when I have an idea about a blog, it comes I'm one of those ways.

Stephanie Feger: [00:12:55] Well, for this instance, it's probably six years ago or so, I had a dream, and it was one that when I woke up in the morning, I couldn't shake off. But in that dream, my husband and I must have been watching way too much America's Got Talent because I was Simon Cowell in female form. I know, right? What an image.

Peter Margaritis: [00:13:16] Yeah.

Stephanie Feger: [00:13:16] And if you know me, you know, and you and I have had many interactions, like his essence is not at my core. I am way too nice, right?

Peter Margaritis: [00:13:25] Right.

Stephanie Feger: [00:13:25] I've got a different perspective than he does. But here I was, the person that stood between someone's dreams and their reality. And it's a lot easier to judge these people who come on America's Got Talent when you're watching them on TV, but I was a nervous wreck here having to make these decisions.

Stephanie Feger: [00:13:41] Well, this young boy walked in. I remember him like it was yesterday. This scrawny kid with blond hair, they walked in with a canvas and his creative utensils. And his talent was going to be some form of artistry. I can tell you, from the moment he started to paint or draw, it was horrific. I mean, I had to tell him, "Dude, you gotta get a job. This is not going to be, you know, your claim to fame."

Stephanie Feger: [00:14:05] So, when I shared this news to him, I was expecting how most people react when you watch the show. They either are extremely sad and in tears, or they're so mad that they use a lot of expletives. There's usually not many in between. He didn't do any of that. Instead, he took his canvas, he brought it over to me, and he gifted me with a smile, and he said, "That's okay. I just want you to go color something pretty today."

Stephanie Feger: [00:14:32] So, I woke up in this dream of this kid who told me to go color something pretty today. And I swear, my friends, and my family, and co-workers probably wanted to admit me into a mental institute because all day, I was analyzing this dream. It was crazy. I kept focusing on what was I trying to be the judge at in life. You know, why was I Simon Cowell? Why was I so miserable? Just a mean human being.

Stephanie Feger: [00:14:54] And about halfway through the day, I realized that that dream wasn't about me, it was about this little boy, and how this little boy acted and interacted with me. You see, I realized that he had a choice. He didn't -- You know, there's a lot of ways to get from point A to point B in life. And I was sitting here thinking that I stood in between his ability to have this dream make it a reality, but this young kid taught me something different. He was like, "Yeah, you think that's a straight line from point A to point B, but there's lots of ways, and you're just one way."

Stephanie Feger: [00:15:24] So, he -- What I realized at that moment is he couldn't control my reaction. He couldn't control if I was going to help him reach his dream, but he could control his reactions and his responses to what happened in life to him. He decided to color that day pretty, to take that moment and make it purposeful and meaningful. And he wasn't going to let me stop him.

Stephanie Feger: [00:15:47] I felt like in that dream, it wasn't so much, "Look at me as a young kid." This young kid, "Look at me. I was able to do it," but he charged me by gifting me with this painting and said pretty much, ""Hey, Stephanie, it's your turn to go color something pretty today." So, that began a new shift in my life to stop looking at life from a certain lens and shift my lens to see the beauty in the mundane.

Peter Margaritis: [00:16:08] Like my jaw came unhinged. It's like, "Wow."

Stephanie Feger: [00:16:15] I know. Cool dream, right?

Peter Margaritis: [00:16:17] Yeah. God, yeah. That was really. No, I get great ideas in the shower, never in a dream. Sometimes in a car, but not to that degree. So, I take the title came to you in a dream.

Stephanie Feger: [00:16:31] You got it. And, actually, a few years before that, I'd been feeling this need to write. So, I would get up in the middle of the night when I had insomnia, and I would just write about something that was heavy on my heart, or that I was trying to think about, and I needed to process it. And then, I got that that dream, and I remember waking up. And after I figured it out, I called my husband. I'm like, "Oh my gosh. My book is Color Today Pretty, and I know what I'm doing now." And it became my life purpose. And it, actually, has now become a movement. I mean, I really believe in my heart that if you can embrace this mentality, you can do anything.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:07] So, I'm extremely jealous for a couple of reasons. One, you live in Louisville.

Stephanie Feger: [00:17:11] Well, yeah. I mean, Louisville.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:11] Two, that your title came to you in a dream, and you wrote it from that point versus I wrote my book, and ask Kathy, it was excruciating to try to come up with a title. I mean, failure, failure. It was just terrible. And then, I was at an NSA meeting and somebody said, "How's your book coming?" I said, "I'm struggling with the title." They said, "Give me the backdrop on it." I did, and they were like, "Hey, how about Take the Numb Out of Numbers?" That quickly.

Stephanie Feger: [00:17:46] It's brilliant. I love your title. It is brilliant.

Peter Margaritis: [00:17:48] And Maureen Zappala, I give her all the credit for it, but it was just one of those things like, "Boom." People have different superpowers, and that's not one of mine. So, your book came to you in a dream, and I have looked through. Basically, you're an open book.

Stephanie Feger: [00:18:11] It's funny you say that. I usually tell people I'm an open book. And, now, there's literally a book that you can open, and you get every single thing about me, the good, the bad, the ugly. And there's nothing in it that is like, "You know, I've got life figured out, guys. Like, this is how I'm doing." And instead, it's more of a journey that I've experienced to help me look at some really tough things that have happened in life, and find the purpose, and help me to take that moment, and allow it to help me grow instead of hinder my growth. But it's an open book, you're right. I talk about some pretty heavy and some pretty light things.

Peter Margaritis: [00:18:45] So, these are little vignettes. These chapters are little vignettes about stories of your life.

Stephanie Feger: [00:18:52] It is, it is.

Peter Margaritis: [00:18:55] Wow.

Stephanie Feger: [00:18:55] And this is what's also really beautiful is there were elements of my life that I'd never talked about. There's actually an entire chapter that had been secret until my book came out. And there are things that I wasn't sure of the right timing. And as I started to write, I started to realize that not only was I gifted with the title of my book in a dream, which is pretty cool, and I'm waiting for the next dream, so I'd get my next book out.

Stephanie Feger: [00:19:22] But I've realized as I took what I was writing that I had actually figured out a path on how to find perspective. And it breaks it into seven sections that was so organic, and it's helped me realize that there is a way for people to focus on the things that matter. But, sometimes, we have to go through an acceptance process to get there, to be able to see through the right lens, to be able to focus, you

know, our spectacles per se, and really see that at the end of the day, the only thing we can control in life is ourselves.

Peter Margaritis: [00:19:56] Well, there's a lot of synergy between this interview and the one that's before you. I interviewed Carrie Sechel. She is a former partner in an accounting firm who left and started her own business. But the themes that you are talking about, in some ways, are pretty much the same themes that she was talking about. And you guys have never met, which, now, this is just us-

Stephanie Feger: [00:20:22] You need to introduce us.

Peter Margaritis: [00:20:23] Yeah, I'm definitely going to do that. But it's an interesting perspective because I've never -- And I'm almost -- What was the one chapter that you kept secret, or can you say it or keep it a secret?

Stephanie Feger: [00:20:38] No, I can tell. I can totally tell. So, when I was -- It's a little heavy, so bear with me. But when I was 16, I was sexually harassed by my driver's ed instructor.

Peter Margaritis: [00:20:50] I get it, okay.

Stephanie Feger: [00:20:50] It was a situation that was pretty horrific, one that -- You know, now, so, that was 20 years ago, give or take. And back in that day, it had no cell phones, and there was no way to document any of this. So, when we called the police after I'd been threatened that if I did, I would be found, and he would -- you know, he would find me and my family, the police didn't believe me. They believed him. And the police actually told me when I was 16 that if I ever spoke about that that I would go to jail for slander, not him for what he did.

Stephanie Feger: [00:21:23] So, for 20 years, I didn't talk about it. I didn't say anything. I went to an all-girls school. I so badly I just wanted to get up in front of my sisters and share these stories, not so much to defame somebody, but more to empower people to

say, "Hey, this could happen, and here are some things that you need to be aware of and ways to put yourself in different situations." And I was never able to do that.

Stephanie Feger: [00:21:44] And when I started to write this book, I knew that there was a chapter, I knew that I needed to acknowledge this. and it was a piece of who I was, a piece of my journey, and a piece of -- a part of finding perspective was for me to own this situation, and figure out how I can take a piece of me that was very broken, and piece it back together, and realize that even though -- Kind of like a hotplate or the stained glass, right, sometimes, you have to break things apart to put it back together to make you a little bit more beautiful. So, I used that as a way for me to realize.

Stephanie Feger: [00:22:17] And as I was writing it -- See, a lot of my writings were my way of working through this. So, every chapter, it felt like I started to -- Kind of like that dream, it's not like I started the chapter knowing what the outcome would be, but I knew it was something I needed to work through. And when I finished the last word on that chapter, I know this is going to sound crazy, but I literally felt like with every word I wrote, I was like adding a feather to a set of wings that allowed me to feel free.

Stephanie Feger: [00:22:41] And here was this thing that had kept so silent for so long that, now, I'm free from. And I talk about it now very openly. I've not --You know, and it's all good. Our culture is a much different culture now, but it is something that was so important to help me figure out perspective, because I could have looked at that and seen myself as a victim.

Peter Margaritis: [00:22:59] Right.

Stephanie Feger: [00:22:59] But instead, I'm allowing it to help me be victorious and to move past it. It's not about what happened, it's about what I've done from it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:06] And it's Chapter 15: Broke and Beautiful.

Stephanie Feger: [00:23:09] You got it.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:09] As you were describing it, I was looking through the table of contents. I said, "I think it's probably this one here." Now, courage is not the right word to use. I don't even know what the right word to use is. It's to be able to sit down, and write that, and share it with the world. Courage is not strong enough. It's not a strong enough word. I applaud you for doing that. And, you know, we all have stuff. I'm going to leave it at stuff.

Stephanie Feger: [00:23:38] We do.

Peter Margaritis: [00:23:40] We all have stuff. And a lot of times, we don't own it. We bury it, we suppress it, but it never goes away. Do you confront it face-to-face?

Stephanie Feger: [00:23:52] I'd like to -- And thank you for your really kind words. I don't know if it's courageous, or it was just time, or it was just I had to do it, but it was one of those things where it was totally worth it. But as I was writing it, I realized I kind of used an analogy of like my life and all of our lives as the growth of a tree. So, bear with me with that because I think you'll understand it. But, you know, I feel like in life, we all, you know, are planted. We're here as a seed, and we go through good and bad to grow. right. It takes the rain to help us grow, and it takes the sun as well.

Stephanie Feger: [00:24:23] And as we grow, we go through these experiences, and our root systems start to kind of break out. And sometimes, we have a wonderful root systems, great family, great experiences. And other parts of our root system, we would love to just chop off and throw away. The problem is if you chop off a part of the root system of a tree, when the tree finally makes it through the ground and gets a trunk, it's not nearly as stable as if it had its entire root system. And I truly believe we're all meant to kind of be like the essence of a tree and the fact that we pollinate others. You know, we go through this process of really creating beauty in the world.

Stephanie Feger: [00:24:55] I share that because I think that it would be really, really easy for me or others to deny situations in their life much like this one that I just shared, and I almost cut off that root system. In doing so, what it would have done, it would never have given me a strong enough trunk to withstand any other hurricanes or

tornadic situations that came. I needed that experience to give me the strength to be able to manage what will happen next in my life.

Stephanie Feger: [00:25:24] And I think it's in owning that and realizing that I can't control this man, I can't control what the police said, I can't control how other people think about it. There's nothing I can control, but I can control me, and how I've allowed that to impact my life, and to make me stronger for it because I'm here because I've got to do something to help make the world a better place and to help other people be able to see the beauty in everything. So, I'm not going to let that stop me. I'm going to let it propel me.

Peter Margaritis: [00:25:47] That's awesome. I love that recognizing these things that are within my control, and there's things outside of my control. And a lot of times, whether in life, or at work, or in corporate America, whatever, we tend to focus all of our energies on things that we have absolutely no control over, and it just spins us out of control versus focusing only on the other things that we have control of.

Peter Margaritis: [00:26:15] I can't fix congress. I don't worry about that. What I can control is writing, voting, writing to them, voting, that's about it, or getting more involved. But if I -- I've got a lot of friends who are so fixated that it begins to take over their lives and takes over their personal and business life, it's like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, focus on what you can control and work on that." And yeah, that was well said by you.

Stephanie Feger: [00:26:47] Thank you. Well, I've really started to realize that, and I kind of did a introspective search in my life. And I'm like, "Okay, I'm 5 feet 2. I live in a family of 6-foot-plus people. I can't control that, right. I can get high heels. I can try to be taller and shorter, right. I can't control that, at the end of the day, I'm short. I can straighten my hair every day. I like straight hair. I have curly hair. My hair is naturally curly. I go outside, and it rains, it goes curly. So, I can't even control that, right."

Stephanie Feger: [00:27:12] So, all of these things in life we think we control, not only from us personally, but you think you can control that promotion in life. You think you can prep for the future, you know, financially. You think that you can raise your kids

perfectly. There's all these things you think you can control, but at the core of it, you cannot control any of it. You can influence that, and you can do beautiful things with it, and you could try. But the only thing you can control is your reactions and responses to life. You can shift, does life happen to you or for you? And I really believe that that's important.

Peter Margaritis: [00:27:46] Yeah, yeah, exactly. It really just comes down to, at the end of the day, your attitude towards everything.

Stephanie Feger: [00:27:54] Exactly.

Peter Margaritis: [00:27:55] And if you -- Yeah, I see it so much in the world of corporate America. I see it a lot in the profession of accounting of trying to control. I'm trying to control the other person's response, or this, or that one. We can't control that. We have to listen to what's happening and make assumptions, or conversations, or something based upon that, but I can't control what they do and what they say, but we're going to try to control because if you leave this office two minutes early, you will be fired.

Stephanie Feger: [00:28:31] Right, right.

Peter Margaritis: [00:28:33] I had to fire someone at a corporate job because the associate couldn't get there on time. It was a culture thing. It wasn't a personal thing, but it was within their culture, they were always late. And because they couldn't adhere, or we couldn't control them, I was told to let this person go.

Stephanie Feger: [00:28:52] Oh my goodness gracious.

Peter Margaritis: [00:28:53] Yeah, yeah.

Stephanie Feger: [00:28:54] Those types of things because, at the end of the day, then we start to see that we're letting our world, our culture, other people's expectations of us dictate us, and we're letting them control us. And at our core and our essence, if you

really want to live a happy life, a fulfilled life, I really don't believe that that's the way to do it, you know. It's not about, are you the person that shows up on time? I mean, I know you need to do that, and there are things in life that need to happen, but goodness gracious, there's so much more depth to who we are and what we bring to the world, you know.

Peter Margaritis: [00:29:30] Right, exactly. Looking through the table contents, the one chapter I wanted to ask about was in the Live Life Childlike. You write about the present.

Stephanie Feger: [00:29:42] Yes. And isn't that beautiful for this time of year?

Peter Margaritis: [00:29:47] That's my question. Are we talking the present of a gift? Are we talking the present or being present?

Stephanie Feger: [00:29:55] Let me tell you a little bit about that. When I have taken a look at the trajectory of how to live in life in perspective, I realized one of the elements is taking a look at the people in our life that are the least calloused. And, to me, those are my kiddos. Those are the young ones. Those, you know, one, two, three-year-olds, and not when they're throwing temper tantrums, but outside of that.

Stephanie Feger: [00:30:23] And I know some people who don't have kids. I'm like, you can even see this in our animals, right. The essence of at our purest form, how are we supposed to be? We're supposed to be humble, honest, quirky, you know, confident, risk-taker, we don't stress about the what-ifs and the could-haves, right.

Stephanie Feger: [00:30:41] So, the Live Life Childlike section of the book is really focused on getting to the essence of what our children can teach us. So, the present is actually a chapter about my daughter. And so, I've got three kiddos, two boys and a girl. My daughter's the middle one.

Peter Margaritis: [00:30:59] Ages? Ages please?

Stephanie Feger: [00:31:02] So, my youngest -- It's three, four, and six right now. I know. And in December, the older to go up a year, but about two years apart. I'm crazy. Crazy. But my daughter is -- They're all special, but she's really special in a sense that until she turned two, she didn't speak. She was a very happy kid, and the muscles in her face, because she smiled so much, never were able to be formed to help make certain words. So, she never spoke.

Stephanie Feger: [00:31:32] And so, at about two, we started speech therapy, and we went through this whole journey. And so, that was about the time I was in the essence and the heart of writing this book. And I wrote. It was actually this time of the year, right before I put up the Christmas tree, and we started to get stuff in the mail, and her birthday is right around Christmas.

Stephanie Feger: [00:31:50] So, the whole chapter is about here we are, putting up this Christmas tree together, and we are living in the moment, and she is thanking me every second of the way, "Mama, thank you for this ornament. Mama, thank you for this beautiful tree. Mama, thank you for our time together." And you have to know, and I do have a chapter on her with her speech delay, but you have to know her talking to me was a beautiful thing because for so long, I never thought that would happen.

Stephanie Feger: [00:32:17] But her heart, the purity of her heart in thanking me for the things that so many of us oversee and overlook proved to me just how beautiful the moments are that we have been given and the little things in our life, the beautiful and the mundane. So, the present is all about we not only should be living in the present, but we can be a present to another person. And if we live in the present, that actually might be the best present we could give somebody.

Peter Margaritis: [00:32:44] Wow. As soon as you said that, my face is going, "Wow." Yeah, I love that. Simon Sinek, he's got a quote out there that is kind of along this line. It's about leadership because leadership has nothing to lose your title. True leadership is the positive effect that you have on another individual. And as soon as you said the present, give a present to somebody, that quote jumped into my head, and it's a positive effect we have on other people, period.

Stephanie Feger: [00:33:24] Period. If I were to question or to do a survey, "And so, what's everybody's purpose in life?" right. And then, we sift away the outliers, and we talk about, you know, really, at the core, our purpose is to make a difference and influence the life of another. I truly believe that. And I don't think that that can be done if we're always behind our phones, if we're always on the computer, if we're always looking for the next best thing, if during this season of giving we're focused on giving tangible items, instead literally giving of ourselves and being present in the moment.

Stephanie Feger: [00:33:55] I think it's a beautiful thing for anybody but, especially, for a leader to do within his group, especially for a supervisor to do it within their staff, especially for co-workers to do it amongst one another and family. You know, there's so many. It's so critical. And I truly believe that that is the best gift. Don't worry about buying wine or, you know, a UK t-shirt. Just kidding.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:17] Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. Slow down there. Slow down there. Don't go off the rails on me now.

Stephanie Feger: [00:34:23] I'm not, I'm not. But at the core, those things go bad. You know, you'll drink the wine. It will go away. Your shirt will disintegrate because you wear it at every game. I'm just kidding. But the gift of you, that's something that will be forever cherished.

Peter Margaritis: [00:34:36] Yes, it is. And that gift can be given in so many different ways. I share a story that after I heard that quote from Sinek, it really resonated with me. And I was flying through DC at Reagan, I don't know, like a 10:00 flight. Go to the men's room. It's hustle and bustle. The bathroom attendant was there. And he looked like he had a hard day, hard week, hard month. And he's just trying to keep up. That place is spotless, and nobody even paid attention to him.

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:08] So, I kind of mentioned. I said, "Excuse me, sir. I was a thank you for the hard work that you're doing here today. I mean, I can't imagine how busy this place gets, but you've kept it absolutely spotless. I just wanna say thank you."

And that guy kind of raised up, straightened up, looked at me, he says, "Nobody ever talks to me. You're the first person that want to talk to me. Two, the first person say thank you. My bosses didn't say thank you."

Peter Margaritis: [00:35:36] The look in that guy's face, well, it was just -- And I went, "Oh my god. Sinek's right. That's leadership right there, the positive effect." Dear Washington DC, the positive effect that you have on other people, not the negative effect, the positive effect.

Stephanie Feger: [00:35:54] I have to say, I had a similar experience. It was just beautiful. I was actually traveling to a speakers' conference, and I had taken a couple copies of my books because you never know when somebody needs that in their life. But on the way home, my luggage, it made my luggage too heavy. And I'm like, "I can't, you know, spend an extra one hundred dollars to check my bag." So, I took the fat books out, and I was carrying them around. I had like two or three hours before my flight. And I kept thinking, "What am I supposed to do?"

Stephanie Feger: [00:36:23] See, now, that I've found perspective, and I live this way, I find that everything in life is very purposeful. So, to me, I'm like, "Okay, I am carrying around five books for a reason." So, I started to sit back and watch. And the people that looked underappreciated, I walked up to them. I did the same thing. I said, "I just want you to know, I don't know why I'm supposed to do this for you, but I feel like I need to give you this book, and I need to thank you for what you're doing."

Stephanie Feger: [00:36:45] And I did it to my waiter who -- I mean, it was amazing. He's actually an author. There were two men that we were all waiting. Our flight got delayed. We were all miserable. And yet, through it all, they were so positive. And I gave all five copies of my book away. And it was, literally, one of the most magical days of my life because, exactly, what you said, here I was having the opportunity to thank people for something that is such so thankless and are overlooked in our lives.

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:14] Exactly. I think -- Was this conference, Influence?

Stephanie Feger: [00:37:17] Yes, it was.

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:20] Because I remember, you did share that story with me because when you say that, I think I've heard this before. But yeah, that is so cool. And welcome to the world of being an author and a speaker because, now, you have to check more luggage. It weighs a lot more because you carry them.

Stephanie Feger: [00:37:35] That's right.

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:35] But the flight back is usually lighter.

Stephanie Feger: [00:37:39] Right, right.

Peter Margaritis: [00:37:39] Usually.

Stephanie Feger: [00:37:39] It was purposeful. I know. So, I was very excited. I was not meant to come home with those books, and who knows how the power of perspective impacted their lives, and kind of did a pay-it-forward initiative. I believe in that, and I believe that your mindset has the power to change so much in your life. And I just want more people to be able to open their eyes to see the world. Lately, I've kind of felt like the essence of what I believe is if you can see the good, then you can be that good. And I truly, at my core, believe that and think we are all capable of being able to see the good.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:16] Yes, we are. Sometimes, we just have to take the blinders off, or better yet, sometimes, just need to stop and just look around. But we get -- I know this is the pot calling the kettle black here, but we get so wrapped up in our lives and our business that we forget. And transparency, I've been on the other side. And recently, I've said, "You know what, we're missing too much stuff." So, I'm, for the most part, stopping working on the weekends, and spending time with-

Stephanie Feger: [00:38:48] Good.

Peter Margaritis: [00:38:48] ... with the family, and stuff, and doing stuff. So, yeah. And you do see a lot more. You do experience a lot more.

Stephanie Feger: [00:38:54] But, you know, that's not easy. And I have to say, that's why Color Today Pretty works for me because I am not like a good weight-watchers person. I cannot follow a diet. For the life of me, I try to exercise every year, and I fall off the rail. At the end of the day, if there's something that I'm supposed to be doing, and I miss one day, I think, "Oh my gosh, I'm a failure." And I just can't get myself motivated.

Stephanie Feger: [00:39:16] Color Today Pretty isn't about that. I actually believe it's about life as a collection of moments, and you get to choose every moment. So, right this second, we get to decide if we want to have a good day, have a good moment. And in 10 minutes, when we get in the car, and someone cuts us off on the road, and we have road rage, and we're like, "Oh my gosh, I just did not have a good moment. That's okay. I can have a good moment now."

Stephanie Feger: [00:39:36] It's a mindset shift that doesn't have to happen all the time because life is -- I mean, life happens. It's real. We make mistakes. We have challenges. We have struggles. We've got to own that stuff. We're not perfect. There's actually a whole section called Perfect Imperfection. And we've got to accept the fact that we will never be perfect. That's okay, but it's not like a diet. This is a lifestyle shift that can happen at any time of your life.

Stephanie Feger: [00:40:01] And because of that, it's something that resonates with me and works for me, and it works with for so many other people because mistakes happen, things kind of push us off, right. We, sometimes, start working on the weekends. So, you can pick it up here any second and decide, "I want to make good in the world."

Peter Margaritis: [00:40:17] Yeah. You don't become a leader if you just attend a leadership seminar. It's the everyday stuff that you do in real life that, "Okay, I may forget. I mean, I do something this one day, but the more I can do it, it creates that habit." From Seinfeld, from when he started doing stand-up and writing, he would write

something every single day. And people who know him that I know have said that he has maintained that. He has not broken that chain at all. And this is how many years later, but it's just taking those little steps. And those little steps, how can people find you and find your book?

Stephanie Feger: [00:40:59] Easy. We've been talking about Color Today Pretty. Go to ColorTodayPretty.com. You can find me there and a link to my book. It's also on Amazon if that's easier for you to go look there. But if you go to ColorTodayPretty, I actually do a regular blog, and that gives you ongoing inspiration. The book gets you started. It gets your head in the right direction. If you just need that kind of fuel for the week, ColorTodayPretty.com, we'll get it for you.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:27] Great. I've enjoyed it. I'm serious, we could probably talk for about four hours.

Stephanie Feger: [00:41:33] Yeah, we could.

Peter Margaritis: [00:41:35] Yeah. We will have to follow up again. But any last words for the audience?

Stephanie Feger: [00:41:41] I just really believe, at our core, we have the ability to make a difference, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of others. And I truly believe it all starts with stopping and realizing what we can't control, and that's you. So, I just hope every moment when you get the opportunity to make a choice on how you're going to color that day that we all choose to color it pretty.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:01] Wow. I can't thank you enough for taking time. It's a pleasure. I look forward to our paths crossing again soon. Take care of those three little ones of yours because they'll grow up. My son used to be that age. He's now 18.

Stephanie Feger: [00:42:16] Oh my goodness. Thank you so much for having me. It's been so much fun. I always love talking to another UK fan.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:26] I'd like to thank Stephanie for, literally, being an open book and sharing her thoughts on how we can change our mindset to gain a better perspective. She has a wonderful message, and I love this book that she's written. Since the interview, I have purchased it, and I have read it, and it is truly a book that's worth everybody's time to read. Thank you, Stephanie.

Peter Margaritis: [00:42:52] In Episode 18 which airs on December 24th, I will take this time to reflect back on the Change Your Mindset Podcast interviews, and share with you bits and pieces from each episode that I want you, my audience, to remember and apply, so you can become more future-ready. So without further ado, I want to thank you all for listening. I want to wish everyone a very happy holiday season. And remember, share this episode with a friend.