

S4E17. Mj Callaway

SPEAKERS

Peter Margaritis, Mj Callaway

Peter Margaritis

Hey, welcome back, everybody. Oh, man, is this gonna be a fun interview. I know I think all my interviews are fun, but today my guest is Mj Callaway. And Mj has got a story and a half that she's going to share with us. And she has a book that she published. Came out right after the pandemic hit. And the name of the book is 'Bounce Up: Outpower Adversity, Boost Resilience, and Rebound Higher.' So Mj first and foremost, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to spend some time with me.

Mj Callaway

Thank you so much for having me, Peter. It is a delight to be on your show. I've listened to some of your podcasts. So I'm happy to be here.

Peter Margaritis

Oh, thank you for being a listener. That's one step even higher. Yay! We met maybe about a year ago through NSA. You're over in the Pittsburgh Chapter. And, I tell you, Dave Caperton and I came over when Kelly Swanson was speaking.

Mj Callaway

Yes.

Peter Margaritis

And that's where we met. And then you have attended a couple of our events. And I was thinking about it because I do interview a lot of NSAers. I said, let me look at Mj, because I saw the Bounce Up. And I went, I got to have on podcast. So, what spurred, because you've written another book, 'Self-defense Roadmap.'

Mj Callaway

Yes.

Peter Margaritis

So, what spurred you to write Bounce Up?

Mj Callaway

Oh, a number of things. First, so many things. First, I wanted to, it to be a book that would inspire others. So, that anyone who was going through adversity, anybody who was going through a setback, could believe in themselves that they could get through it. And I share, I have several stories that really

could have taken me down a different path. It could have caused me to have a victim mentality, instead of looking at it as a way to Bounce Up. And I use that analogy, because bounce back, if we say bounce back, think about this, it could take us right back to where we were before the adversity hit,

Peter Margaritis

Right.

Mj Callaway

So, think about the pandemic, do we want to go back to March 14, 2020? No, way. And the same with me. One of my stories that I shared in the book is being a two time cancer survivor. There isn't any way I want to go back to Fall 2016. I learned so much more in those four years, not only personally but professionally. Because I realized my business is running me instead of me running my business.

Peter Margaritis

Oh, that hurt. I can relate with that.

Mj Callaway

And it caused stress, which you know, I can't say that that's what caused the cancer, but I am sure it didn't help it.

Peter Margaritis

Right. Exactly.

Mj Callaway

You know, and with so think about this, I'll give you a great analogy that I like to share. Is that okay with you first.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely.

Mj Callaway

Okay, think about have you ever bought or had one of those inflatable punching bags that have sand on the bottom. And it usually at least in old, you know, old school days, it had a clown on the front. Now there's lots of different pictures. You punched it, and it bounced right back. It didn't go anywhere. It didn't move. It didn't grow. That's bounce back.

Peter Margaritis

That's a great analogy.

Mj Callaway

It is. And whenever we get back to being on site, I actually take a punching bag on stage with me. Or when I'm training on site, I take it with me, you know, because the visual was so great.

Peter Margaritis

That clown will get punched again. And punched again and punch again and punched again.

Mj Callaway

Exactly. And that's us because life hits us. And I love to use Rocky. Are you Rocky fan? You know, the Rocky movie? Rocky Balboa?

Peter Margaritis

Oh, yo, Adrian? Yeah.

Mj Callaway

Yeah. Well, in one and I believe it was Rocky V, he has a lecture or talk or speech to his son. And he says, 'No one's ever going to hit you as hard as life hits you.' Which is so true. You know, and that clown, that punching bag is life hitting you. So, instead of thinking about bounce back, let's think about bounce up. And you play basketball. So, I'd love to share my basketball analogy. Does that sound good?

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely.

Mj Callaway

So, think about the basketball, and what position did you play Peter?

Peter Margaritis

Well, I was. I challenged. I was a guard.

Mj Callaway

So, thinking about that my son was a guard too. He's was the point guard, because he was a little guy. But think about the guys who are under the hoop, they're in the paint, they are ready to get that rebound. And the person who jumps higher, the player jumps higher than everybody else on on that court. And I like to think about Wilt Chamberlain, because he has the most rebounds. And probably, at least in our lifetime, no one will ever catch on because it's 1000s. You know, he's a head by 1000s. He grabs that ball. He brings it down. Now, he has control of the ball, the next play, and depending upon where the team is with the game, he's control the game too. So, taking control, it doesn't matter what happens in life. We have control over how we respond.

Peter Margaritis

Wow, I love the analogy. That's great. And a lot of people do take a victim role.

Mj Callaway

Yes.

Peter Margaritis

You know, why is this happening to me versus I have control over my decision. I have control over this. I want to take control of the situation. And in my life, I had a diagnosis at that ripe old age of 40 something as a Type 1 diabetic. Which seems strange, but it's really not as strange as one thinks. And I just want okay. Somebody said, Well, are you devastated? It's not pancreatic cancer. It's diabetes. It can be managed. Just have to manage it. It's gonna take that Bounce Up mentality.

Mj Callaway

Yes. Exactly. And you had steps to take. You had to action to take. Because the other part, you know, some people might stay stuck. You know, you didn't. You had taken control.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely. And I think about the pandemic. When it hits, I think a lot of people got stuck and didn't, you know, shift, adapt. Change their business model. Put new things in because they thought it was going to end sooner than it has. And by the time they decided they need to do something. I think some may have waited too long.

Mj Callaway

Yes.

Peter Margaritis

And the thing is, to your point, I don't want to go back. I wrote a recent article that along the same lines about change. I don't want to go back to the 70's, 80's, 90's. I don't want to go back when the internet, when the World Wide Web was an internet service. And download speeds are like minus one. It caused it to have safety systems in them. And I don't want to go back to that. That way of life. I want to be here and working forward.

Mj Callaway

Right? Oh, my goodness, think about it. Back in the day dial up, and then just sit and wait. You're listening to that dial tone. No, I mean, we have information at the speed of lightning, you know, which is awesome.

Peter Margaritis

Right? I hear a lot my, some of my friends who go, 'God, I wish to just go back. You remember sniffing mimeograph paper in elementary school? How used to make copies?' Thanks for the reminiscing, but no, I don't want to go back to those days. It may have been simpler. But, you know, this is how progress. Things keep bouncing up, moving forward. Not getting stuck in a spot.

Mj Callaway

Right.

Peter Margaritis

So, I do have a question, because as I was reading a bio, certified sales professional. There's a story there.

Mj Callaway

Yes. I ended up in sales. And I know you consider yourself an Accidental Accountant. I would say I am an accidental sales professional. I originally went to school for fashion merchandising.

Peter Margaritis

Oh really?

Mj Callaway

Yes, and then realized, I really wasn't what I wanted to do. So I switched to Business Administration. And then when I had gotten out of school, the jobs that were open were in sales. So, I'd taken a job, actually taken a job with a fitness center, because I thought it was about fitness. And I was a cheerleader whenever I was in high school, and I thought oh, this fits right with what I'm dealing with, you know, when I've always done. And I realized it wasn't about fitness. It was about sales. So, I ended up in a sales position. And it seemed like that's what my journey was one sales position after another. But I will say when I really thought about going back and you know how we dig into our stories. The story about sales really goes back to when I was a child, my mother and my aunt were making these swans out of coat hangers. You know, the wired coat hangers, and tulle, nylon tulle, and they were making they were swans. They made them in different colors and it would go on like the back of the toilet tank or in the bathroom somewhere on a shelf. And I was going door to door selling these for them. And for everyone I sold, I got a quarter. Well, I was really into selling those. And it's so funny because when I think about it, and a neighbor would say, Oh, no, I don't need it. And I say, oh, but you can use it. And I would give them ideas of how to use it. And I sold a lot of those nylon tulle, swans, which is funny. I wish I had a picture of them now that I could post on my website.

Peter Margaritis

When I think about your book 'Bounce Up," a certified sales professional in sales, you hear a lot of No, right?

Mj Callaway

Yes.

Peter Margaritis

No, don't need it, don't need it. There's a lot of rejection, and been selling, and to have the perseverance and the ability to bounce up not bounce back, and keep moving forward. I see that as another piece that went into your book is, as a sales professional, if you're not bouncing up, your bouncing into a new job.

Mj Callaway

Yes, absolutely. And Peter, I've been in not only sales, but I also have a background in publishing. So, as a freelance writer, I've more than 2000 articles that have been published. It's another industry that is all about rejections. If you've ever heard the story from authors saying, I've more rejections, I could post, I could wallpaper my office with them. So, you know, with sales and with publishing, I was accustomed to rejections. So you just blow it off. And you say next, you know, it's like, okay, we weren't

a great fit, but that's okay. And when I think about I have back in 2004 and 2006, I had two books that were published by Warner Books, and it's under a pen name. And those two books, they were held, the manuscript was held by McGraw Hill first. And McGraw Hill actually said No. Held up for five months, the manuscript. And afterwards, I will say, you know, at first devastated, and one of the things that they said was, I didn't have enough of a platform, my co-author, and I. So, I was like, okay, how do we get a platform? So, taken that step, but I looked at it as McGraw Hill wasn't the right fit. And when the contract came around for Warner Books, it was a perfect fit. So, even though we might get that rejection is because it wasn't right at that time.

Peter Margaritis

But we tend take rejection personally.

Mj Callaway

We do. And that is what catches us up. And I will tell you, I've had rejections from, especially my last corporate position, I had rejections at first, you know, no, no, no. And then there were times where I would just keep reaching out to them. And two years later, that person who said no came back, or someone who said no referred friends to me. So, that no can lead you to other places.

Peter Margaritis

That's great advice, and that's something I will take your advice on. I enjoyed building relationship. And sales has always been a challenge for me. But I do work on it and try to improve it every all the time. But nobody's ever kind of put it that way that I will keep that. I'm going to take that piece of advice and run with it.

Mj Callaway

Good. Because anybody who has said, No, your next step is, can we still keep in touch?

Peter Margaritis

Right.

Mj Callaway

May add you to my list? You know, I understand. I also wish that if you get a No, I want to find out why I got the No. That's something that I had always, you know, made sure I asked. What is it that had you making that decision? You know, I never use Why did you make that decision? You know, what caused that decision? What could I do better? You know, to see if it was me, every time we did get a No, and I still do this, I evaluate. I evaluate. Okay, how could I make it better next time? What can I do differently? And then finding out from that other person, that potential buyer, you know, what did they want that I didn't have? Or say I had, but sometimes it's miscommunication.

Peter Margaritis

You know, as your telling this story, Fall last year, I was approached by a CPA firm here in Ohio with a new product that I was offering and I thought I had all my bases covered. I thought, everything. And, and I luckily, I knew these guys, and I could see that this whole process was going south rather quickly. And I said, Okay, guys, stop. Well, I thought I was prepared. I was not. I love the questions that you've

asked. I didn't think about that aspect. Helped me here. What didn't I anticipate? And I just said that and shut up. Just listen to them. Didn't take anything personally. And then I said, Thank you. I'll be back. I'll be back. But I need I need to take your advice. And make sure that I know the answers to those questions.

Mj Callaway

That is saving the sale. That is the part of saving the sale, and noticing either the body language or the change in tone of voice, and then being able to be aware of it. So you can take a step back and say, I believe I miscommunicated here, what have I missed? And you did with saying, help me here, You know, taking that step back. Another little component that you can use, the little tidbit for you, is asking before you get to the ask is asking the person, 'How do you see me helping you?' Because you want them to say out loud how they see you helping them? Because if they can't voice it out loud, you don't have the sale. So, there isn't any sense you ask. And so you have to go back. Go back to the discovery. Go back to asking those questions. You missed something along the line.

Peter Margaritis

Right. And you know, the beauty of it is we're all human. We all make mistakes We all fail. Yeah, you're going to beat yourself up a little bit over, but get over it. Bounce up and move forward.

Mj Callaway

Yes, it's always about taking that next step. You know, moving... and sometimes in sales, it isn't about getting the contract during that conversation. It's about setting up another meeting. It's about building that relationship.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely.

Mj Callaway

And which is really important right now during, well COVID and post COVID. Because I say it's the trust meter. Our buyer's trust meter is broken, you know, and if you don't want to think about being broken, it has hit an all time low. And it's because of everything that has happened within the last year. So, buyers aren't sure who they can trust. You know, in sales, if we start to sound like we're manipulating, it's going to put up such a red flag. So, it's going back to giving that value. Building that relationship and not pushing.

Peter Margaritis

It's interesting you say that, because when the pandemic that the NSA community, and that's the National Speakers Association, people that talk not those who listen, as the old tale goes, there's like a fraction of the membership that goes, 'No, we guys push hard during this time.' And there's another bigger fraction that said, "I am not gonna ask for money. I'm gonna... how can I serve my clients that might take a prospect and not ask for any money, but just be there to help.' And I think, partly that was the smater approach for the long term.

Mj Callaway

I agree with you 100%. And it's also who you are, your mission, your vision, and what's authentic to you. I created numerous tip sheets, you know, like an infographic that I gave out to anybody who wanted it. It's here. I created a sales toolkit that I gave for free to chamber members, or anybody on my list who needed it or wanted it. That felt good to me. For me to be pounding the pavement and pushing to say, you know, hire me, hire me. That didn't feel good,

Peter Margaritis

Right. And the one thing I did recognize when the pandemic, everybody was at home. And now we get to deal with a platform, whether it's Zoom, or whatever, 99% of people had no clue. So, I went to the Ohio Society of Association execs. So, the Executive Director, if anybody needs any help with any of this stuff, call me. I'll be happy to help them. I'll be happy to host it for them. I'll be happy to do whatever they need. I'd be happy to do and at no charge. He goes, 'What?' I said, 'Yeah.'" Even with my wife's work, I was going to be... there was one aspect of it. They were going to be hosting their board meetings and being privy to the conversations. No, which lead to... no we are going to go get a subscription, but we want to use you as a resource. Perfect.

Mj Callaway

Yes, I have offered a couple of organizations that I'm in that if they didn't have a higher level of Zoom, then I would be happy to host them on mine. And I would be like the back end tech for them. So. like you giving that value, and it feels good.

Peter Margaritis

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, the cash flow didn't look that great, but you know what, when it hit and I saw gigs dying off on me. Luckily, I had some backup cash flow that I could rely on, and just went... As someone told me I'm using this in my email signature line, 'Be positive. That's negative.'

Mj Callaway

Love it. Love it. Yes!

Peter Margaritis

That I'm getting so frustrated that the word but, you know, I think there's a little bit to Zoom fatigue. I think people will take it a little bit too far. And they'll go woe is me. It's like, you know what it's happened. We have to deal with it. So, make a positive attitude and embrace it. Versus like that Geico commercial. Don't be like your parents. Hey, who was wants to open the PDL? Oh, god that me No, no, not me. Just embrace it. Learn it. It's frustrating. Everything, everything new takes time. But just go on with the right attitude and per your book, Bounce up, don't bounce back.

Mj Callaway

And you've said it, it's attitude. So, I have a colleague, an NSA colleague, who said during a conversation, I don't want to do this. I want to go back to to where we were before this happened. I want to be able to get on a plane. I want to do 20 keynotes in a month. Okay. Well, we're not there. So, we can't do that right now. So, what are you going to do instead? Being stuck?

Peter Margaritis

Yeah, we get...I think we stuck because we're focusing on things that we have no control over.

Mj Callaway

Right.

Peter Margaritis

And to your point, you focus on things you have control over not the things you don't have control.

Mj Callaway

Exactly. And it's stuck in the problem instead of thinking about the solution. And the easiest way to go from problem to solution, because problem is we're being reactive, and we're making comments and we're making statements. When we switch to a question, we switch into solution. And I'll give you a personal example. So, back when I was first diagnosed, and I'm going to use this because everything that happens to us personally, impacts us professionally.

Peter Margaritis

Absolutely.

Mj Callaway

When I was first diagnosed, I had a 20% chance of surviving. If chemo didn't work, and chemo had a 50% chance of working. So, I had a choice, I could whine and cry and everything else. And I will say I did cry, you know, but I also needed to make some changes. Changes in my lifestyle. So, when I had, and I called chemo magic one. That was one of my first steps, because anytime I talked about the breast cancer or the treatment to my kids, I could just see like the wind taken out of their sails. And they're millennials, and I didn't want every time they looked at me for them to think of it. So, I created fun names. I created instead of chemo, it was magic one because I believed it was going to reduce that tumor. For radiation because I had radiation too, I called the machine buzz because Buzz Lightyear so much fun. And when you think about buzz, you think about fun. So, I did that with everything. Even the IV, which I was attached to for seven hours, I called my boyfriend because my boyfriend was going with me everywhere. Look Peter, I have you laughing, and that's what I wanted to do. But it was a way to show anybody, my clients, my kids that you can flip a situation, I call it flip it. You can flip anything. So, I have tears.

Peter Margaritis

I'm crying! Oh my god.

Mj Callaway

Here's another one. I refuse to let the doctors called me a patient. They did call me a guest. Okay. I will say I annoyed them, but they knew me so well. I went to every single appointment dressed as if I were going on a business appointment. And that was a date with my future self. I used a flip it so during when I was going through treatment, they did tell me that more than likely you'll land in the hospital a few times. Because the intense magic wand we're giving you. We don't give it to most people because they would make it. And it means exactly what you might think it means. So, during that time, they said

you have to exercise. You want to get it through, but it was during flu season. I was told not to go to the gym because my immune system tanked. However, we have a beautiful conservatory here. Fitz Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. I joined, you know, a membership, a year long membership. So, I would go there to walk so that I was helping push everything out. Plus, it's gorgeous. It brought peace of mind to me. So, it goes back to one of your favorite words improvise. Improvise, what can you do right now with what you have. And the people that got unstuck, or moved through the pandemic positively, are the ones who improvise. They used whatever they had right now, to make it happen.

Peter Margaritis

Mj, your attitude is just so wonderful. And as you tell the story about your treatment and your boyfriend that goes with you everywhere. Back to the forward of your book, and the woman who did the forward was talking about your treatment and basically talking about your attitude. You wrote that when you lost your hair it didn't shake you. You would come into your mastermind group, and you'd be styling a new wig. And I do believe she said even one wig was purple?

Mj Callaway

So I had, I had not quite purple, but I had because I couldn't quite do that. But I had extensions. And then I had hats that went with them. So, it was...the oncologist would say, 'MJ you're styling again. There you are, Mj, styling again!' So, I transitioned into it. I knew that it was going to lose my hair before I did so. When I did so, it wasn't a major shock. In fact, Peter, none of my client, and I worked the entire time through, none of my clients knew that I had been diagnosed with cancer. I'd like to say cancer visited me. Nobody knew. What I did was I started to wear some fashion hats. So, that when I went from having to wear the wig, the wig was underneath, and I called it my new hair. My new hair was underneath with a hat on top. And then after people got used to that. And fortunately was winter then I got rid of the hat. And then I just had my new hair.

Peter Margaritis

That's a great story is she also writes in the foreword that she had a friend or colleague goes in pretty much the same thing that you're going through. Yes, the colleague took the opposite approach, and stayed in the house, had this doom and gloom attitude about herself. And I think the woman who wrote the foreword and try to get you to talk to her. She wouldn't even talk to you.

Mj Callaway

Renee Thompson is who wrote the foreword, and she is the CEO and founder of Healthy Workforce Institute. So, she sees a lot of attitudes. Her subject is on bullying, so she really sees it. But exactly, she had a friend who was in same exact position, and took the opposite approach. And it was so sad that she did not reach out. Several of my doctors did ask if some of their other guests could reach out to me. And I said, Absolutely. You know, my chiropractor, I don't know how many times she gave out my name. And I did take every possible treatment, like I did acupuncture, and I did aroma therapy. You know, I did Reiki, whatever I could do in addition to your traditional treatment. I included it because who knew what could work?

Peter Margaritis

Right? It's amazing. What attitude does.

Mj Callaway

Yes.

Peter Margaritis

it is absolutely amazing when healthy, positive attitude can do. And I think you're, obviously you were thinking about yourself, but you're also realizing that you also think about the people that were around you.

Mj Callaway

Yes.

Peter Margaritis

But you were thinking not only about you, but you're thinking but also your kids, your client. Everybody who interacted with you. You're thinking of them too.

Mj Callaway

Absolutely. Peter, one of the things that I do in addition to sales, and there's so much more to sales, and you talk about change your mindset. And mindset plays such a huge part in sales. And when I train or when I talk to sales teams or during conferences, I cover mindset, because we need mindset in order to get results. So with it, if I could not handle my own adversity, how the heck could I go into a sales team or company and say, who don't follow what I did, but listen to me? No, I had to be a role model. And, you know, I know some, you know some of my backstory of when I started over 11 years ago. I need to be a good role model for my children. Because unfortunately, my former spouse is not because of an addiction. So, I need to show them that life is going to be hard, you know, like Rocky says, you know, life is gonna hit you harder than anything else. And we need to be able to Bounce Up. And I needed to show them that. And you mentioned rejections. How could I go into a sales team and say blow off that rejection? If I couldn't rebound? Okay, I'm a little passionate about it.

Peter Margaritis

I love that. But when you said that, I just reflected back to a story about my son. When he asked this girl out for the first time, he got shot down. He was so bummed about it. I said this, 'Did she say why?' He went, 'No.' I said, 'Well, okay, there's only one girl in your school?' 'No.' Is there anybody else you might. So we'll go back and think about what you did before, and try something different. So he home about a week later, and he got rejected again and got rejected again. Then he came home one day says, he said, 'She said yes,' and he had this, this, he felt really proud. He felt really good about himself. And I went, 'Okay, bring it back down a little bit. Just because you got to date, don't get overly cocky there my friend,'

Mj Callaway

Right.

Peter Margaritis

Bring it back. They take a level approach. But when you were talking about that rejection that story just popped into my head. At one point, I think he thought he was like the Don Juan of the Middle School.

Mj Callaway

And in sales, we do have those highs, you know, I went from so my last corporate position, I had taken a commission base position, which is kind of crazy. When you think about where I was at that point. I left a 20 some year marriage, I've \$500 to my name, you know. I left a house I had, I didn't even have a bed at that time. And I needed to leave because my safety was threatened. So with it, but I knew that I had belief in myself. And I knew that sales was the one area that I could really show what I could do. And if I worked really, really hard, I could make more money. Because prior to that I was in a salaried sales position for nonprofit, which I didn't make a lot of money. So going into it, and I will say it was an industry that I didn't know anything about. It was in the building industry. It was with a national builder that was building custom homes on your own lot. I didn't know about prep, lot prep. I didn't know about city water versus, you know, having to have, you know, a sump pump or anything like that. In fact, I went through three interviews. And then the third interview, there were three gentlemen in the interview with me, and someone said, Do you know what a header and footer is? And I said, Yes. They didn't ask anymore. So they went on to the next question. Okay, I will tell you a few weeks into that position. I was saying, MJ, what did you do? So I was at the bottom of the barrel at that point. But I learned, you know, I use what I'd like to say is I incorporated a Power Team. And I found people that could mentor me that could answer questions, that could be an accountability. And I went from being the bottom of the barrel to being a high producer, producing three times my sales quota. But we do get into sales slumps, as, you know, a sales professional or as a business owner, really, anybody in business has some piece of sales. So, it's finding a way to turn it around to flip it is what I like to say.

Peter Margaritis

When we use that phrase in some of the social media posts that will provide you graphics. I like that 'Flip it' and the 'Bounce Up.' And you're in the building industry. And I'm sitting, I'm sitting at a time and I'm imagining this whole interview process. And I know why they hired you because of your attitude. I mean, you've not... you smile all the time, which I just I love. I wish more people would but you've just got this genuine smile, the genuine attitude. You're very authentic. And yes, you are a motivational speaker. There's some motivational speakers can't hold a candle to your motivation.

Mj Callaway

Well, thank you!

Peter Margaritis

Wow, I mean, you you've... I do research on my guests. And I'm always Yeah, I can't go into depth. But during the interview, a lot comes out and you've motivated me big time. You've inspired me to look at sales from a different perspective. I've always been good at understanding adversity, accepting adversity, changing that mindset. But there's always been that kryptonite. It's not gonna be kryptonite anymore. Thanks to you.

Mj Callaway

Good, and it is thinking about, and I think this is what had me successful in an industry that I didn't know anything about that I learned from the ground up. And it was thinking about the other person. My very first client, so I started on a Friday and on Saturday I like very first client. And he came in, he knew which model. And get this, I walked out of a storefront. So, I am selling out of a storefront next to a Panera Bread. I didn't even have a custom homes. Fortunately, I was really good at creating descriptions. So, he ended up buying a house for me, not that day, but six months later. And I was finding out about him. I knew so much about my clients. I mean, one and I'll give an example. One couple had four children, under the age of eight. She homeschooled. She also canned, and he worked from home. Three boys, and the littlest was a girl. They were going to build a house. It was like 1800 square feet. And I'm looking at this house, and I knew it didn't have enough space for them. And I said to her, Jen, this house will fit you now. But think about this in five years, your boys are going to be teens and tweens, they're going to have friends over. They'll have sports equipment. Where will you put that? Ended up putting them in the best house for them. But looking at them as what is best for them, I knew I could lose the sale. You know, because they were going into a higher bracket model.

Peter Margaritis

Right, right.

Mj Callaway

Or they could go elsewhere, and have someone tell them what they wanted to hear. No, I had their best interest. And one more other story where having someone's best interest comes into play. I was the young couple that came in, and he really wanted to buy a house. So think about this, you have to buy land, you have to get your land prep, which could be anywhere between 20 and 50,000 or more, plus the house. So, there's a lot of components to it. And I knew looking at where they were in the way of their pre- approval, and where they wanted to build, thinking about the taxes being going about land prep, thinking about how much land costs. And I said to them, please go home. And whether it's your parents or an uncle, or an older sibling, have them, look at your finances. Have them look at this quote that I'm giving you that is only on the house before you jump into this project. A week later, I got a call and he said, ' MJ, thank you, because we can't afford it.' And I looked at him as what would I want...How would I want someone to treat my son or my daughter? And I would not want someone to treat my daughter push the sale through and have them lose the house? Do you know what came out of that, Peter? Three recommendations, three referrals from friends of theirs who ended up I built a house for them. That's a great story. Sales people do get a bad rap. But there's stereotype out there. There's who would have done the sale, got their commission. Called it a day. They're happy. As I said earlier, you don't think about yourself, you do. But you think about who you're interacting with. You think about that audience. You think about that client where people are coming in, and what's best for them. Not what's best for you. Right.

Peter Margaritis

And that goes a long way in building strong relationships and getting great referrals.

Mj Callaway

Yes, you know what I will say I am grateful and blessed to have had that empathy. I can't really what I feel it's something that it's a trait. It's a strength that I had that I've developed. But I had a piece of that

not everybody has a piece of that. So, they really have to build that trait. So I'll say I was fortunate that I had, I just had it blossom.

Peter Margaritis

But it's funny you use the word empathy because I'm writing a article right now on empathy for my podcast. And I start off by talking about this book called Humans are Underrated. Jeff Cohen, who was former editor of Fortune Magazine, where he writes, most successful leaders in the future will be those who can empathize. And guys women empathize better than you. Period. You better learn, because men are not the best empathizing at all. Luckily, improv taught me how to empathize. It's a critical skill that's needed, but I mean, just that in itself, those who empathize with the other person and help them figure out what's best for them.

Mj Callaway

And with it, I will say it people that can be empathetic are people who are more resilient, because they can look at the bigger picture. They're not focused on themselves. They're focusing on the company or the team or others. They're more resilient. They are not focused on them. You can tell when a change happens when it when change happens within a company, and you're telling the team about it, or you're sharing it with the team, you can look around and see the difference in body language. And then the first statements, 'Oh, my goodness, this is going to cost me so much work, or I can't believe we're going through this' or, you know, rather than 'Ooh, this is going to help us down the line. Ooh, new software. That's awesome. You know, I'm not going to have to go through 15 steps for moving down to five.' And that's where people who can empathize, who are more empathetic, are usually more resilient.

Peter Margaritis

Yeah, I agree with that. And the word that I used in this article is those who are self- absorbed create chaos versus those who empathize creates an environment, creates a culture who empowers people to do things, not micromanage them. There's examples of that all around. But as I wrap up, and I use to do this, and I thought about it the other day, I used to ask my guests, you know, this litany of questions, these rapid fire questions, just to kind of get to know a little bit better. But I said, actually, people, I'm going to start asking people, what's a fun fact about you that I don't know or maybe a lot of people who know you don't know? What's that fun fact about you other than your wonderful smile?

Mj Callaway

Well, thank you, I probably don't look like I can be a risk taker or someone who likes to take adventures. And so a fun fact, I'll share two. One, I zipped mind over gators in Alabama. So, I had taken a zip line course of actually seven towers. And once you got past the first tower, you could not back out. You were in for the ride, or the next seven rides. And it was actually over gators, which is pretty awesome. Like I love to talk about that. And I will say when I went through the second one because the Gators were over the second zip. And I'm looking down. I did wish I had my camera but it was afraid to take my camera because it was a zip line where it didn't stop you. You actually had to control it. You had these heavy leather gloves on that had a steel plate here and you had to grab the line, you couldn't grab it completely because it would throw you backwards. But you had to like just slow yourself down with it.

Peter Margaritis

Wow!

Mj Callaway

Yes. And then the other fun fact is when I was in UP Michigan, Upper Peninsula of Michigan, I toured a black bear rescue or black bear reserve something like that. And I got to go inside of an area with baby black bears. And there was one baby black bear who would not leave me alone. He was so darn cute. He was also pretty big. But I had a backpack on, and he wanted something in my backpack. I'm not sure what it was. We were actually playing tug of war with my backpack. And I that because I was actually on a media trip at the time. And that backpack was I didn't take a handbag. So I needed it. It had everything in it that I needed for the next week. It's like you cannot have it. You cannot tear it apart. I need it. So those are two kind of fun fact.

Peter Margaritis

Wow! When they said she is a risk taker, I went, I kinda already knew what to do because of the attitude. I think...Let's try it! Why not? As long as it isn't painful, whatever. And then you made friends with a Black Bear. Not everybody can say that.

Mj Callaway

Right? Because another one I say is I biked down a volcano in Maui, but I think people can say that, you know, they biked down. So, you know, I've done a few other things, but those are probably the most interesting.

Peter Margaritis

Well, Mj, this has been an absolute pleasure interviewing you. I've learned so much. You've motivated me. I know you're going to motivate my audience. Thank you so very much for your time and I look forward to when our paths crossed, preferably not in Zoom again. But if that's the case, I'm always up for a conversation. I look forward to seeing you in person when we can get back to some sort of normalcy.

Mj Callaway

Peter, this has been such a delight and I cannot wait until we can sit down and maybe have a cocktail or two.

Peter Margaritis

Oh, twist my arm please. Thank you so very much.