



EP279_Laura Sawyer

Lisa Nichols 00:03

Chromosomes, little strands of nucleic acids and proteins are the fundamental genetic instructions that tell us who we are at birth. Most people are born with 46 chromosomes. But each year in the United States, about 6000 people are born with an extra chromosome, making them a person with Down syndrome. If you've ever encountered someone with Down syndrome, you know that they are some of the kindest, most joyful people you will ever meet. They truly have something extra.

My name is Lisa Nichols and I have spent the last 24 years as both the CEO of Technology Partners in as the mother to Ally. Ally has something extra in every sense of the word. I have been blessed to be by her side as she impacts everyone she meets through these two important roles is CEO and mother to Ally, I have witnessed countless life lessons that have fundamentally changed the way I look at the world.

While you may not have an extra chromosome, every leader has something extra that defines who you are. Join me as I explore this something extra in leaders from all walks of life and discover how that difference in each of them has made a difference in their companies, their families, their communities and in themselves.

If you'd liked this episode today, please go to Apple podcasts or wherever you listen and leave us a five star rating. I'm thrilled to have Laura Sawyer on the show today. Laura is the founder and CEO at LKS Styling and Consulting. So welcome Laura to the Something Extra Podcast. I am so delighted to have you on the show today, girl.

Laura Sawyer 01:22

I am glad to be here. Thank you for having me, Lisa.

Lisa Nichols 01:54

Yes. So you and I met last August at the Brace for Impact Gala. And you were sitting with our mutual friend Tricia Zimmer Ferguson. And Tricia said, Oh, Lisa, do you know Laura? And I think you and I had seen one another in circles, but really had not gotten to know one another, so, then you and I had coffee and the rest is history. I'm like, Oh, my goodness, girl, you got to come on to the podcast.

Laura Sawyer 02:21

Well, I'm grateful. And I think that's just the power of relationships, wherever you are. It just speaks to that.

Lisa Nichols 02:28

It is so true. Absolutely. And especially in St. Louis. You know, it's a small big town, right? So Laura, you are the founder and CEO of LKS Styling and Consulting, which we're going to talk a lot about. You've been featured in MSNBC, Fast Company, Travel and Leisure, Elle India, and so many other media outlets. You're also a St. Louis, most influential businesswoman. So congratulations on that. That's definitely a notable achievement.

Laura Sawyer 03:01

Thank you.

Lisa Nichols 03:03

Yeah, your business, Laura, has just been on this incredible revenue growth journey year over year, and I can't wait to dig in. But before we dig into that, I wanted to talk about growing up. And I know that you didn't grow up here.

Lisa Nichols 03:18

That's right.

Lisa Nichols 03:18

You grew up? Yeah. Tell our listeners where you grew up.

Laura Sawyer 03:22

I am originally from all over Southern New York State. But I most identify with growing up at West Point, the Military Academy, I was born there. My dad went to medical school after my brothers and I were born and we moved back and moved back, excuse me, when I was in middle school. And I lived there for a few years. So originally from New York State all over and I moved to Manhattan after college to work in a creative field and just happened to meet my now husband out one night in New York City. And he is also a New York native, but we both absolutely call St. Louis home now. He came here over 20 years ago, and I moved here after we met 10 years ago. So St. Louis, we are home. This is home now. St. Louis.

Lisa Nichols 04:11

Well, we're very lucky. We're very lucky to have you, Laura, you and Mark both because Mark is actually the CEO and founder of Bonfire, which is a wonderful company as well. But when you were a little girl because your dad I know was an Army colonel. And but what did you, I know what you like to do, but tell our listeners what you did? Yeah, it's interesting.

Laura Sawyer 04:36

It is it's I think it's often surprising when people first meet me and you know, they see how I sort of, you know, in person show up and it is definitely a thread of both my passion and also the product of the fashion work that I do. But I grew up as a competitive downhill skier. So I spend a lot of my time, you know, between, you know, to two different households with my parents being divorced and spent a lot of time with my dad and my brothers playing sports. And skiing just happened to be and still is one of my great passions and so I raced competitively downhill, slalom and giant slalom for five years growing up. It's always the sort of like, you know, two truths and a lie game that people can play that usually is what stumps people.

Lisa Nichols 05:21

And it's so funny. Well, I have to ask you, because you're really obviously into fashion now, I have to ask you, did you do that as a little girl? Did you have paper dolls? Or was that like, not something that you want to do? I mean, I, I know. I've got friends that said that, you know, that are in the fashion world that have said, Oh, yeah, I would cut out things from magazines. And I was constantly drawing fashion. Did you do any of that Laura?

Laura Sawyer 05:47

I was definitely a Barbie girl. I mean, I spent a lot of time with just having self play myself. My parents both worked long hours and very hard, demanding jobs. They were both, now retired, but in the health care professions. And so I, you know, had my brothers. But when I wasn't skiing, I also was doing other things that were of interest to me. And that did include Barbie. And I remember, I've written about this recently, obviously, with the recent Barbie movie that came out this past year, I would take fabric swatches and sort of like small cuttings of fabric from my mom's craft room and craft corner, and I would pull them out and I would cut them out. And I would take a glue gun and I would make clothes for Barbie. I would paint, I hope I don't get blasted for this. But I would paint the dream house walls with nail polish color. You know what I'm making my own to put my own kind of spin on it. So I think that, you know, for me, that was really a big articulation of creativity, expression and fashion and really making it my own.

Lisa Nichols 06:54

I love that. I love that. Well, you went on to get a bachelor's in Media Studies and digital culture from Sacred Heart. You've got a master's in interactive technology from University of Alabama. And then Laura will talk a little bit about this. But girl, I'm like, Boy, you are you definitely a growth mindset kind of gal, because you are now getting your master's in psychology from Harvard, which I know you're juggling a lot. But you know, can you talk about this a little bit Laura, because I think every experience, whether it's competitive, downhill skiing, or whatever adversity, even in our life, I think really makes us who we are. And I know the summer before your junior year was a really difficult time. And I think you were told by your parents that you were on your own. And I think about you and I think goodness, Laura, you could have approached that setback, if you will, a couple of different ways. You could have said, well, I've just got to quit my education. But I think instead you had a lot of grit and determination and found resolve away and figured it out. So can you tell us a little bit about that story? And what did you learn about yourself during that?

Laura Sawyer 08:11

Well, thank you, first of all, for mentioning that and saying those kinds of things. It's easy in hindsight to look back now and think of how far I've come, for one. But you know, when you're in the moment, it you know, all you're trying to think about when you are left to be on your own and to figure it out financially, there are a lot of different paths that you can take. And for me there, I don't remember exactly, but there must have been something in me that was passionate enough, that just said, Keep going keep moving forward, you just need to put one step in front of the other. And, you know, I can credit that a little bit to growing up skiing competitively. You just you have falls, you slide on ice, you've got to be able to get up and keep going. And if you have bad falls, you need to be able to recognize that and rest and do

what you need to take care of yourself too. And so I think what I learned, you know, on top of those things coming out of that experience is, I trusted myself then to do things and make choices for my future self. And I recognize that now and I'll continue to recognize that going forward. So when I think about building a business, being an entrepreneur, being a member, you know, that is a contributor to my community, being a wife, being a friend, you know, all of these roles that we have, how can I apply that to each of them and think What am I doing presently, but then how can I also really just like, love myself and make choices that are going to be you know, not just for the immediate but they're going to provide satisfaction long term?

Lisa Nichols 09:49

That's really good. I know that you started during that time, Laura, I think you were working 40 hours a week or 40 plus hours a week you were taking 21 course hours. That was a lot. But to your point, you did it and you did it for your future self, right? And, you know, even today, you're continuing on with your education. And I'm so proud of you for that. But I think you started any event design, and you did this for about nine years. But then you made this significant shift into fashion consulting, what really inspired that transition?

Laura Sawyer 10:29

So to thread through that, to answer it, to tee up the answer to that question, I, you know, explained a little bit about my experience, and you have as well to Lisa, but I in the midst of, you know, being you know, mostly identifying with being a student athlete, and then in high school, and then going to college and then realizing my junior year that I needed to take responsibility for a lot more things than I was ready to and happening very quickly. And so I moved, you know, through my early 20s, into this space, that I feel so fortunate to have been in this creative field working in New York City for an event design firm, initially out of college, but there was still a part of me that had this narrative of, you don't have the pedigree to work in fashion, you didn't grow up this way, you didn't have that kind of exposure. And you know, I say that cautiously, because there were a lot of opportunities that I also had growing up, too. And so at the time, it was just this narrative, I think that when you are in and for anybody and different levels of survival mode, your creative brain and functioning brain is inhibited. And so it's very easy to be able to walk down this internal dialogue that you have with yourself where you think, no, this I'm not, I don't belong there. That's not for me.

And so, you know, I moved to St. Louis 10 years ago, and in that process was realizing that, you know, I was going to go in house for an event firm, I then went and worked internally at a financial services firm. And so I was just sort of like dipping my toes in different things as I was establishing myself in this community trying to figure out what I wanted to do. And it was there at the financial services firm that I met one of my two still extraordinary friends and mentors. Who, this woman at the time, and still very much is a thought leader in that financial space. And I was advancing events with her. And we had built a report over a year and a half, two years, and I had left that company to help launch the strategic event design firm. And I was there for a year and I was it was burnout before burnout was a buzzword. And so she sat me down for breakfast one day and was like, you do not seem happy? What do you want to do? And I said to her, you know, I'm not quite sure. But what I know is that I love fashion, I've always used it as a source of inspiration for my design, work and events. And there are a lot of aesthetic things that translate from that space to the other. And most importantly, this is still my North Star. If I could help at the time, one woman I work with men now too. But if I could help one woman feel really great about herself at one point throughout her day, then I achieved what I set out to achieve. I don't even know how to do that, though. I don't know what that looks like. And she said, Well, have you thought about being a personal stylist? And I said, Yes, of course. Anyway, to fast forward this she, you know, said, I'm going to fly you to Portland, Oregon, I'm going to be your first client, do your research, figure this out, we're going to try it out and see if it works. And that was six and a half years ago.

Lisa Nichols 13:45

That is wow, kudos to that lady. And I know Mark probably encouraged you to write to have courage to step out because Mark is an entrepreneur himself. And I'm sure that...

Laura Sawyer 13:57

I can't deny that at all. You know, it doesn't just take that one person I think, you know, my husband Mark has been and was then and still is an extraordinary source of drive and just bouncing things off of an inspiration to be an entrepreneur since especially since he has as well but there have been a lot of people and still are along the way on my journey.

Lisa Nichols 14:22

Yeah, that's beautiful. Well, I think we could all look back and say those people in our life where there was maybe a pivotal moment, something that they said that they believed in us, you know, I really do, Laura. So, you know, entrepreneurship, though, certainly is not always a cakewalk. It comes with a lot of highs but it comes with a lot of lows. Exactly. Um, but you know, can you share a memorable moment that really significantly influenced the direction

of LKS? And I'm sure that, you know, this lady had something to do with that in helping in the beginning. But was there something else that happened along the way that really influenced your, the direction you took the company?

Laura Sawyer 15:09

Yes. And that would be in the early days, the combination of conversations that I was having, and it still is the case today, with people in their closets. I walk into people's most vulnerable spaces in their homes, in a very private setting, people are, you know, trying clothes on, you know, we're talking about their body, and that was when I realized that, yes, this is clothing, but it is so much more than this. It's so much deeper, there's such an underlying psychology to it. And so that really, you know, over a period of months, quickly, I realized I was having these light bulb moments like, there's more to this, and I'm really interested in it. And I want to dig deeper into the science behind getting dressed and what does that exist, you know, how much information is there about that out there. And it really set me on this course, to where I am now today, in my work, which is very evidence based, and also very qualitative, and frankly, very, very just like tactile and tip worthy of like, here's what color to have on for this. So it's, it's all of these things across this great broad spectrum. And, you know, what I think has been so fascinating to me. And what really does drive me though, is just serving people and understanding that we're just human beings coming together, and we want to, we all want to feel really good. And so that was really, what was the moment of a-ha, you know, that I was like, I have a responsibility to do more, to learn more and to educate myself so that I can have, you know, impactful conversations and help people.

Lisa Nichols 16:53

Yeah, Laura, I think about it that's your why. That is your why. Is really helping women and men, because you do work with men now just feel good about themselves, there's got to be a lot of gratification in that. So, you know, I do really want to and then we're going to take a quick break, I do want you to really dig into this applied psychology. You know, but how, how does the and it's interesting to me and I just now put this together, you're getting a degree in psychology from Harvard. Now, and so I'm now putting this all together. She's wanting to go deeper with the psychological aspect of clothing. But, you know, how have you really seen you know, that playing out with individuals or organizations, is this, the psychological aspect?

Laura Sawyer 17:46

Self control is a really big aspect of the psychology of fashion. And what I mean by that is the capacity that an individual has to make effort into all sorts of tasks. So let me paint a picture about this and you wake up in the morning, you are, you know, going to a professional job, whether it's you're walking, you know, to the other room to go to your office, or you're getting in your car and you're driving somewhere, whatever it may be, you have a series of tasks that you have to do, from the moment you wake up to the moment you log on to the computer. And so the first thing that you know, a lot of people will do is brush their teeth, and I liken to, getting dressed is like brushing your teeth, it's very monotonous. And we all have to do it. Some people enjoy it, some people don't really enjoy it, but we know at the end of the day, it has to happen. And so the amount of output that goes into having self control, in any kind of decision making an any kind of task is going to operate similar to a muscle on the body does. So you work a certain muscle over and over again, you've conditioned that muscle to be stronger, right? You know, if you don't work that muscle over and over again, then you obviously know what happens and it's harder and it's more challenging, and you get exhausted faster. The same kind of thing happens when people go to get dressed in the morning. You know, I talk to people and they're like, Oh, it must be, you know, not an effort for you to get dressed every day. And it's because it's what I do every day.

So you know, and by the way, I also have my moments where I want to be in my comfy clothes too. But to that point of the muscle for people who struggle with it a lot more, or I would even argue putting them in the same category of, don't really put a lot of value emphasis on getting dressed. It's going to be a lot harder to make changes and to you know, begin to incorporate some new concepts into what it means to get dressed every day as compared to maybe other people who don't. And so understanding that there is a psychological demand and physiological draw and depletion that comes out of just the act of getting dressed every day is the underpinning to much of this. And so, you know, to that point, I'll say, if you're getting dressed in the morning, and you're in a rush, you didn't sleep great. You've got maybe a meeting or a presentation later in the day, you're rushing because you are a caretaker at home or whatever, you know, all sorts of reasons that happened in the morning. And you put something on that you think works, and all of a sudden you get to work, there's a hole in it, there's a stain on it, it doesn't quite fit you, right, that is going to impact you throughout your day. The way that you think about getting dressed in the morning, how you speak to yourself is another element of it. We have these subconscious thoughts that are running in our minds all day long. And by no fault to anybody, we can get dressed in the morning and have some narrative in our head, sort of, like I talked about, I didn't think I had the pedigree or the experience to work in fashion that was sort of running on autopilot, we have all these things that are running on autopilot based on our exposure, and our experiences throughout our

whole lives that are dictating how we look at ourselves in the mirror in the morning. So that among many other reasons is really why this is such an important aspect of fashion and getting dressed.

Lisa Nichols 21:14

Yeah, it's an important aspect of fashion. And it's fascinating. And so I'm really glad, Laura, that you're taking the time to dig deeper and so that you can help more women and men with this. But we do need to take a quick break. And we'll be right back with Laura Sawyer on this something extra podcast.

AD 21:33

Hey there, in a challenging business climate like this savvy leaders looking at technology to find an edge. This can mean the difference between staying ahead of the curve or playing catch up. It's time to collaborate with the highly skilled experts at Technology Partners. Our team of technologists draws upon decades of experience for your project, with each bringing a passion for solving problems, and a track record of success. How can we help you overcome your biggest technology challenges? Visit technologypartners.net to book a free consultation with one of our leaders.

Lisa Nichols 22:03

So welcome back everyone to the Something Extra Podcast with my friend Laura Sawyer. So Laura, you know, I would love for you to tell our listeners about this: when you told me about the closet in the cloud, I got so excited. I'm like, Oh, my gosh, why wouldn't everybody do this? And we just kind of talked about the psychological aspect of fashion. And you're so right, because when you're stressed out just getting ready, because maybe things you don't feel like it looks good on you, or whatever the case might be. That can just set you up to the whole trajectory for your day, right? But I did get so excited about the closet in the cloud. And you know, I'm thinking for busy professional women, we all make a lot of decisions. I don't know what the, I think this decision, I think we're supposed to be making 45,000 decisions a day or something, something like that, you probably know what that is. But I'm thinking, to make one less decision for a professional woman, it would be so amazing. So tell me, tell me a little bit about the closet in the cloud.

Laura Sawyer 23:17

Decision fatigue is definitely something that comes up in every conversation I have with every client and every friend and everyone that I meet when we I think break the ice a little bit. So we have you know, 60-70,000 thoughts per day, on top of them making decisions. And many of those thoughts are negative thoughts, actually. And so, you know, I hear often from female clients in particular, they will try it on three, four or five outfits before they feel like oh, you know, either, this is okay or like I have no more time left, I've run out of time, I gotta go and I just have to deal with what I'm wearing. And so to reference, again, you know, some of this research on what self control does for us, it really depletes us if we're not feeling great about it. And then you add in, you know, the part about negative self talk, and you've just got a recipe for just disaster sometimes for people. And so, you know, I'm doing a lot of things for clients, and it's why the psychology of getting dressed in style is so important. But part of that is also solving problems for them and making their lives very efficient in this area of life.

You know, I talked about being you know, getting dressed being this thing we have to do every day. And you know, if you are active in your community or at work, you know, there are some days where you have to think about I'm getting dressed today and I have to get dressed for five different things that are on my calendar. You throw that into the mix and it just complicates things even more. So I do not own the proprietary software that I use. This is a software that is designed for people who do what I do for a living. And it has been the most valuable tool in my toolbox in my business. And so this closet in the cloud or virtual closet, if you will, is a platform where I take photos or the client if I work with them virtually, because some people I work with in person, if you're in St. Louis, or if you're in New York City, where a book of my businesses, and some people also fly to, you know, depending on the client relationship, or virtually, either way, photographs of individual items are taken of all the pieces in your closet. And they are cataloged and they are uploaded onto this web browser that I use for all clients.

And from there two things happen. The first is I start to create outfit combinations, or just, you know, looks right is what they're called into what we call in our lingo, in my industry is a Lookbook. And I say okay, Lisa, here is the top that you wear with the pants that you wear with the shoes that you wear with the earrings that you wear with the necklace. And here's this same top and here are five other ways that you wear it now too. So my focus is really on maximizing what is existing for people, which is a common misconception as a sidebar that happens in my kind of industry and how people think how I work. Sure I shop for people. But really, it's about finding out how to maximize your wardrobe. And we can do that by having a new perspective, having a creative idea put looks together and then to catalogue them for you. So that you can wake up in the morning and say, Oh, this blouse is clean, I want to wear it today. I really like it. These are my meetings, this is efficient. Here are five ways that Laura put it together for me, you can do that while you're brushing your teeth. You can do that while you're having a cup of coffee or if you're still in bed for an extra

minute. You can pick your outfit out and then get dressed and go do what you need to do everything else in your day that is important.

Lisa Nichols 26:56

Yeah, I just think it's brilliant. I really do and you even catalog it. Okay, if you've got a business meeting, here would be the outfits here would be if you've got some sort of evening event, right, Laura, I love it, you're really taking or minimizing I should say the decision making because it's still up to you what you pick, right? But I just love the combination. And I remember when we talked, you said Lisa, I would come into your closet, I would look at everything you have, you know, maybe something you know, really needs repairing, let's get it repaired. Or maybe it's really something that you're like Lisa, you really shouldn't be wearing that, it was like 40 years ago, or whatever. And so you kind of start with that purging aspect. I just I think it's I think it's brilliant. Laura, I just absolutely love it. So the the pandemic brought all kinds of changes challenges, really to our industry. But how did it specifically impact you guys? And what adjustments did you have to make to navigate successfully through the pandemic?

Laura Sawyer 28:03

As an entrepreneur, it was fairly daunting in the beginning, because the phone call stopped happening, and no one was going anywhere. And so what I did was very quickly turned around and dug into my relationships and my business, and started putting a newsletter out, which I still do today. And talking about, you know why it matters to get out of your pajamas, how it can actually create delineation in your day. And so things that were really meeting people where they were at more so, than coming from this sort of out of touch space, and then we were going through this experience together. So you know, being a compassionate truth teller is a really big part of my job. And by doing that is one actively listening and to explaining with clarity, and just providing some inquiry to because I don't have all the answers, none of us have all the answers. But you know, from a pandemic perspective, that was the beginning. And then I'm grateful, you know, it started to change a little bit. And I think, you know, it's very easy to briefly look back today and reflect on the past few years. Because what it did was teach people by experiencing a lot of discomfort and I'm just speaking, you know, to be sensitive, just from the perspective of getting dressed every day. It taught a lot of people that this really, really matters. And it matters because you can not feel great about yourself. And it matters because you can feel great about yourself. And it matters because of everything in between that.

Lisa Nichols 29:39

That is so good. Yeah, I was going to ask you about your newsletter. I think it's called Style and Substance. Is that correct?

Laura Sawyer 29:48

That's right.

Lisa Nichols 29:49

Yeah. So how would our listeners subscribe to that Laura?

Laura Sawyer 29:53

They would go to and I'm sure you can put this in the show notes. It's a little bit of a mouthful, but it's the words style and then the word substance.substack.com. (stylesubstance.substack.com)

Lisa Nichols 30:05

Okay, very good. Well, I hope our listeners will go out and subscribe to that. So I know that you also are doing something called Salon X, where you're inviting female founded fashion brands in how has that gone? Tell us more about that? How has St. Louis specific specifically been responsive to that, you know, kind of strategy that you've got going there?

Laura Sawyer 30:31

When I launched my business in 2018, and I had come off of doing 10 years of events. And I talked about, you know, having burnout before burnout thing. I also, in addition to realizing the common conversations I was having with clients about body and psychology realized that I wanted and needed to do events to market myself. And so I, coming from, you know, another place into a new community into a new market, started to learn and realize quickly that, within the realm of fashion, first of all, I just want to point out, there are extraordinary retailers, extraordinary stores and extraordinary brands in St. Louis. And I've talked to many of them. And I think that they would perhaps agree with this, which is that, you know, there still isn't, there's this sort of growth challenge of recognition of, you know, fashion in the Midwest. And I don't say that from a criticism perspective, by any means, because I am an active participant in that space. But I realized, too, that there was a demand for more experience by more people as it relates to fashion and shopping and styling. And so I, you know, tapped on existing, and then new potential relationships with brands that

don't have a physical presence in St. Louis. And I said, come to St. Louis, there are amazing people here, they want to shop, they want to experience your items, they want to test them out, they want to try them on, you know, just say yes, make it happen. And within that, you know, there's an element of me inviting the founders of these businesses thus far, they've all been female owned, and inviting either the founder or the CEO to come and have a salon style conversation with me. And those who choose to come to these events, they've been free events. And we're working on a few for this coming year. And they're just really, um, they check a lot of boxes, you know, I don't deny that I'm one. You know, they check a lot of boxes as a business owner, they check a lot of boxes to as someone who loves fashion and connecting with people.

Lisa Nichols 32:37

Yeah, I love it. Because you're supporting other women, business owners, like you said, getting the brand. And then it's, it's such a treasure, I think, for the women in St. Louis, Laura, to be introduced to these brands that they might not otherwise be introduced to. So I think I think you're exactly right. I do think it really does check a lot of boxes for you. So, you know, I'm going to talk a little bit about clients success stories. So can you think of one success story where your consulting work really stood out illustrating the transformational power that the psychological aspect of fashion did for maybe a client of yours? And obviously, you don't have to name names.

Laura Sawyer 33:21

I definitely won't, because it's a very confidential list. But I need to think about that for a brief moment, because they could be just the smallest moment with somebody when they put a dress on. And they look at themselves in the mirror. And it's something that they thought, Oh, I could never wear that before. And I sort of nudge them a bit outside of their comfort zone. And they are like, thank you so much for having me try something new. And taking the barriers out of just getting in these barriers are like ordering it online, you know, waiting for it to come finding time to try it on, you know, to not be uncomfortable about it. I mean, these are these, to your point about making decisions. And all these thoughts that we have all day like these are things that create friction for people if they're not comfortable on it. And so, watching somebody put something on their body, and all of a sudden their body composition changes, their shoulders go back, they smile, they take a deep breath. It's really an extraordinary act to witness. And it's a privilege to be able to do that in my work. So those moments happen all the time.

Lisa Nichols 34:33

That's, I love that. Well, and I was just thinking, Laura, as we were talking who would not want a compassionate truth teller in their life, truly?

Laura Sawyer 34:46

I'm sure do.

Lisa Nichols 34:47

Me too. Because you might put something on and think Oh, this looks really good. But then a compassionate truth teller is going to come, come along and go yes, but maybe pair this pair of shoes with it, and it will look 100 times better. So I just think it's wonderful what you're doing. So, you know, obviously, like I'd said before, you're a growth mindset person. You're getting your master's right now from Harvard, you know, what are some other ways, Laura, have you found that you can learn and that you can grow as an individual? And obviously, that is a big, that's a big chunk of your time right now getting through that master's at Harvard, but are there some, you know, certain things that you do like podcasting, getting together with just girlfriends? I mean, I know that your one mentor that helped you, I think you're still friends with her, right? And so what are some of the ways that you learn?

Laura Sawyer 35:49

Sleep is number one. I prioritize my sleep, because I can't do any of these things without it, among other things. And so that is always first and foremost, I am such an extrovert and I love going to dinner with my husband, I love hanging out with my friends, I love meeting new people look at where that's brought us, Lisa. And I am always taking action to put myself in situations from a growth perspective that I maybe feel a little bit uncomfortable in. Which I've had some people say to me, like, you don't seem like you're uncomfortable at all, but I am. I just, you know, I work the muscle a lot. And I continue to work in when I don't work it for a while, you know, I go back to that feeling of uneasiness. And I think it's important to point that out. Because, you know, even when I do speaking, which I also do around the applied psychology of fashion, even when I'm meeting someone new at coffee, you know, having those little butterflies in your stomach, and those nerves and moments when you're trying something new, they remind you of, they put you in a place one where you know, you're saying I'm having this response, because I care about this. And they remind you that you're trying something new. And so I, you know, anything from you know, being interviewed on podcasts, what I'm really focusing on trying to do more of is writing op eds around the psychology of fashion, it's a really challenging space to be in. And so from a growth perspective, you know, I have people that are helping me with that. And, you

know, lastly, I'd say, and I talked about this one mentor, who helped me in the beginning, and still does very much I have this other mentor, who started as a client became a friend became a mentor, returned all the friendship stayed along the way as well. And she just proposes the most extraordinary questions to me, and really challenges me to think layers deeper than I do. And so, it's just not being afraid to inquire.

Lisa Nichols 38:03

Right. Oh, I love everything you just said. And it just reminds me, Lauren, because people would look at you and go, Oh my gosh, you're never uncomfortable. You never had those butterflies, you're just out there, right? But to your point, I mean, anytime we're going to meet someone new, I mean, we, you know, we have butterflies too. But it just reminded me of this old saying, and I'm a huge quote, person, but, growth never happens in the land of comfort. Growth never happens in the land of comfort. It's when you put yourself in those somewhat uncomfortable situations that you grow through that. And then it just builds on each other, right, Laura? So, you know, maybe it's the first time for a podcast being a guest on a podcast, but you do it and always say you're gonna do it and you're not going to die.

Laura Sawyer 38:55

Also getting dressed, it's not going to happen. That's a great point as well, you know, just try something new. You're gonna be okay.

Lisa Nichols 39:06

Try something new. It's okay. It's okay. Yeah. I just did a quote. I just did a post yesterday or day before I don't remember and Nelson Mandela said courage is not the absence of fear, it's the triumph over fear. Yeah, so just because you see someone doing something, don't think that they don't have a little fear. So, you know, in that way, we're all connected. We're all more alike than we're not, I think. But, you know, I've got a little lightning round for you here and then we're gonna talk about something extra. So a little lightning round. Three staples, favorite staples in your closet, three to five I'll give you, of clothing that every woman needs to have.

Laura Sawyer 39:50

Number one, the right underwear and bras are just underpinnings in general. It starts with that. The metaphor for life, it starts at the foundation, okay. So start with, you know, the skin, the mind, the body, the mind, the internal than the skin, and then the underwear and the underpinnings. So that's number one. And then, you know, increasingly, jeans have always been, you know, such a, at least from an American culture perspective, jeans are such a staple. And, you know, I pay a lot of attention to how people are dressing and what workplace cultures look like, particularly now coming out of the pandemic, and how that's going to look going forward. As, you know, it all continues to evolve industry, you know, specific and collectively. So, jeans, though, is always a good answer. And I'd love to give you a specific type of jean, but I hesitate to do that because everybody's body is different, I will say, get a jean that doesn't have holes and rips in it. And skinny jeans are still in for people, for people who asked me that, they're still in. So are wide leg jeans. So are cropped jeans, just make sure that they fit properly, which is always key, and they don't have any rips and tears in them because they will not only literally last longer, but from a stylistic perspective, they will last longer from being sort of, you know, in style. Those are the two I would focus on.

Lisa Nichols 41:23

Great answer, I love it. I love it. Well, what is the best advice you've ever been given?

Laura Sawyer 41:30

Oh, let go of your ego. And I'll explain. This other mentor and friend that I now have talked a little bit about said to me, you need to let go of your ego. And I don't mean the ego that is like, you know, bolstering yourself and you know, being sort of better than or whatever you want to kind of fill in, in that definition of ego, what she meant was, let go of the ego that saying no, hold back, don't try to you know, don't shine, don't go do this thing. Don't go walk down this path, because you don't actually know what you're doing. That was the ego she was referring to. And she was like when you just start to give that up, like, amazing things really can happen. But it's I'm gonna bring it back. It's like building a muscle. It's like stepping in and trying these new things like we were just speaking about, you have to just do it over and over and over and over again. But when you realize it, and I think you, you internalize that and feel it enough, it allows you to say, okay, I can let that go a little bit more. I'm still a person with humility, and grace, but I also have these great gifts, and show them, and shine them. And you're doing other people truly a disservice when you're not.

Lisa Nichols 42:53

Yeah, that is good. You know, I was just thinking about this this morning, you because you hear Angela Duckworth, right, wrote the book, Grit, about grit, and you hear a lot about grit. But I was thinking this morning, there is a way to have gracious grit. Gracious grit. Grace to yourself, grace to others while you are pushing. And yeah, it reminds me of

another see, I'm a big quote person, Laura, I told you, and this is why my brain works, but, lift up while you rise. So you know, you're lifting other people up while you're while you're yourself moving forward. And I think that is certainly you, you've done that and are continuing to do that. So you know, what would you what would you say to another female who is possibly considering stepping out of the boat and onto this entrepreneurial path?

Laura Sawyer 43:50

Again, six and a half years later, within context of that, I realize it's easy for me to say, go try something new, but I really, really mean it. I did not have any formal training or background in the work that I do today. And I had enough people around me, who were one, lifting me up and speaking to me and telling me I could do it and seeing the potential that I had, and still do. And then people who were saying, I'll pay you, on top of it. And the reality is, is that you just need to you just need to go. But I added a caveat to that. An NYU Stern Professor, Scott Galloway, has talked about this a lot in the past few years, which is in essence like you know, people saying do what do what you what's your passion, and I believe that I truly believe that. But sometimes passion doesn't pay right away. And that's what he says. And so I people saw that I had a skill, and I had enough curiosity desire to want to do it. And I took action on it. And there was passion, but more of the passion continues to build, it builds on top of that. So those are things that I think you need to be able to pay attention to.

Lisa Nichols 45:14

It's good, favorite thing you do for fun? And I know that you love hanging out with Mark. That's probably your favorite thing. It's just no matter what you're doing.

Laura Sawyer 45:25

We weren't, I mean, everyone is sleeping is leading really busy consumed lives. And I love to watch a good sci fi movie with him. I like sci fi. He really likes sci fi. We'll watch it with our cat. But I just I love a good book. I love a good book. So I love that you're pulling out all these quotes, because I'm like, I know I know what you're talking about. You know, I've read some of these things. I've read, you know, the book about grit. And I just, you know, for fun, it's non psychology reading. No, because that is fun. But it is also school and it is also work. So I love a good juicy beach read.

Lisa Nichols 46:01

Yeah, I love that too. You give me a good book and a beach and a happy camper. I'm a happy camper. One more question that I'm going to ask you about something extra. What's your BHAG right now for LKS? Do you have a BHAG? A big hairy, audacious goal?

Laura Sawyer 46:20

I love that acronym. I've never heard that before. I was like, I hope you're gonna tell me what that means. So thank you. Yes, I mean, write a book and build on thought leadership. I mean, it's, frankly, a really clear path forward for me. I don't have a, you know, I have sort of a mindset around timing, but I've painted that picture. And I also accept that it could look a little bit different than how I've painted it right now. But the picture is fairly painted.

Lisa Nichols 46:51

Yeah. Beautiful. Well, Laura, what do you believe is this something extra that every leader needs?

Laura Sawyer 47:00

I said it before about my work, and it's compassion. And I think within that, you know, the gift is to the giver, ultimately, and it's this fortuitous, you know, excuse me virtuous cycle of compassion. So you give compassion to people, they receive it, hopefully, you know, and first of all, when you give it not with the hope that they take it and pay it forward, but, you know, inevitably it can do that. And so I think within that, it's just compassion and kindness.

Lisa Nichols 47:31

Yeah, that's so good. This has been so much fun. I literally could do this with you for another five hours. We're not gonna do that. I just need to invite you into my closet. That's really what I need to do next. But, hey Laura, thank you so much for making the time. I just know that our listeners are going to enjoy hearing from you and I just wish you continued success with LKS.

Laura Sawyer 47:54

Thank you, Lisa. It's been a pleasure.

Announcer 47:56

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