

## **Ep. 42 Who Am I, Now? Legally Blonde Edition!**

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 0:27**

Welcome to the podcast today! It's graduation season. When you think of a graduate, what comes to mind? An 18-year-old donning cap and gown, football stadium's full of college grads, or maybe you're lucky like me to have the world's best daughter-in-law graduate this weekend with a doctorate in public health. Congratulations, Madhura. We're so proud of you. In today's episode, we're going to talk to a guest who went back to law school in her fifties. Yikes. It's legally blonde, minus the dog and short skirts. My guest isn't the only one. I woke up to the lead story on our local news of Janice Hall, who at 81 graduated from college this week with a business degree, and she's going back for her masters. We often think of education as the domain of the young or as a way to increase our earning power. Today we're going to talk about learning and what it does for mental wellness, not just our brain, but how learning at all ages in the classroom, in book groups, an online course even challenging yourself to put together an IKEA wardrobe, improves all aspects of our intellect, which then improves our mental wellness. I am so excited to talk to my guest today. She is definitely a member of the Lifelong Learners Club, and while I've never asked her this question, I think it took a ton of courage to walk into law school in your fifties. Welcome to the Inner Challenge Podcast.

**Guest: 1:59**

Thank you. It's great to be here.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 2:02**

Can you tell our guests a little bit about yourself?

**Guest: 2:05**

I am 56 years old. I have four children. They're all grown now. I had them when I was really young and I ended up being a mother at home.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 2:18**

All of us know that being a mother at home to one child, let alone four, is a full-time job. I always ask each guest just to define in their own words what mental wellness is for them.

**Guest: 2:31**

For me, mental wellness is being able to be present in the moment and it doesn't have to be a good moment. It could be sadness or anger or whatever to be able to stay present there and not be thinking about the future or the past.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 2:50**

Wonderful. How do you know when you feel mentally good? Mentally well?

**Guest: 2:55**

I can stay present without freaking out about something.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 2:59

Yeah.Yeah.That's a really good measure. I want to switch to the topic at hand today cause I am really interested in your story of how did you decide to go back to law school, at what age?

**Guest:** 3:11

50,one or two.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 3:13

How did that happen? Was it something you always wanted? Did it pop into your head one moment when you were in the moment, or what was the story?

**Guest:** 3:21

I'll tell you, I always planned to have my children, if I had any, which wasn't necessary to have them in my thirties. After I had started my career. I thought I would be an engineer or a lawyer. When I had my kids really young, I thought that's okay. I'll just do these early years and then I'll go back to school. Then my brother-in-law, who is the smartest person I know, tried to go to law school and couldn't get in. And then I panicked and I started thinking maybe this won't be possible anymore. Realistically looking at life with children, I thought it wouldn't be fair to do this, until they start school. Then when it was time for them to go to school, we ended up homeschooling because I just felt really called to that. The decision to go to law school was always there. It was something I kept putting off, and then something I became increasingly afraid I wouldn't be able to do. But afraid isn't the right word because I loved being a mom. It wasn't that. It wasn't until the kids left, they finished their college and I was trying to figure out what I'm going to do next, that I was lost all of a sudden.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 4:35

OH, this is a great segue to a piece of information I want to give. One of the goals of this podcast is to have people increase their knowledge of mental wellness with this idea that knowledge is power. I talk about Erickson's developmental stages, which Eric Erickson developed in 1950. The average American died at 65 in 1950, and in 2011, Catherine Bateson, who is a daughter of Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, anthropologists, she was a cultural anthropologist, came up with an amendment of Erickson stages, and that is Adulthood II. Adulthood II is 46 to 70 or so. It is when someone like yourself, the mothering is done. Or a couple clients I've worked with, they had been nurses or they had been other professions and they had this inner yearning to do something else. What Catherine Bates says with adulthood II is we live to be 78. We know people eighties and nineties and that we should look at this psychosocial question of Who Am I, Now?, with a new lens? And that's what I hear you saying you did. Is that a fair representation?

**Guest:** 5:55

That is, I've never heard of that, but that is exactly what happened. Yes.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 6:00**

That's one of the reasons I wanted to do this podcast with you because the choice Bateson says at this developmental stage, mid to late forties, onward to 70. Who am I now?, is do I stay engaged in the world or do I withdraw? In order to go back to law school, it really wasn't about staying engaged in your world, it was actually becoming engaged in many different worlds. Is that a fair guess?

**Guest: 6:29**

Absolutely.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 6:31**

What was it like to begin to say it out loud to your husband, to your friends? I think I'll go to law school.

**Guest: 6:39**

Everyone I said it to at first, responded kindly, but I wasn't serious. Even my family. I spent a year going back and forth about that. But MJ, I had an unfair advantage because my daughter was in law school and she would call me every day and say, mom, you would love this. This is what your brain is made for. She said I have this gift. I'll call it a gift. Everyone else calls it an annoying tendency to see what's going to go wrong. She said that's what lawyers need to be able to do. So, people will appreciate you in this field, unlike your children.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 7:15**

Yes, exactly. That is also what mothers are supposed to do. So maybe all mothers are future lawyers. We haven't thought of it that way. I don't think that it's an unfair advantage to have a daughter who is a lawyer and a daughter who knows you well. But I am curious what it was like cuz it's a role reversal.

**Guest: 7:36**

Yes.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 7:36**

You have a daughter saying, I know you. I see you. You can do this. And she was doing it daily. Yes. What was that like?

**Guest: 7:47**

It was wonderful. It was really wonderful. And another funny thing about that, I talked her through her three years, she would call in a panic because, law school is hard and all these things were happening. And then when I was in law school, I would call her and she would just say the same words back to me. It was very funny.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 8:05**

Wow. Women supporting women. Yes. And she is in adulthood I. And she is coaching you in adulthood II. Absolutely. I always say it's the power of one. We don't need everyone to believe in us. We just need one person. While your family was like, oh yea law school. Ha. You had this one person.

**Guest: 8:29**

Yes.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 8:30**

That's one thing I want to say. If you're someone who wants to stay engaged, if you're someone who wants a second act or third act or fourth act, look for that one person. You have this daughter who basically is your cheerleader. And you still have to take, the LSAT.

**Guest: 8:46**

Yes.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 8:47**

What was it like to prepare and to get ready for that?

**Guest: 8:49**

She signed me up for a prep course for the LSAT. Wow. And yeah, she bought it for me even because I was like, I'm not sure. Then I felt committed because she had paid money out for me. So, I did the LSAT prep course and then I sat for the LSAT and it went really well, and I was like, oh, maybe I can do this. OH, that's great. But until then, I still wasn't sure that I could.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 9:13**

Were you not sure that you could, or was it other people's doubts made you Not sure.

**Guest: 9:19**

I'm not sure. It's hard to be surrounded by doubts.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 9:23**

And hear your voice. Yeah,

**Guest: 9:25**

Even when I did well on the LSAT, I wasn't sure that any law school would accept me. So, there was still all of that, or if this was just crazy because it's a field that requires experience to actually be good as most fields do.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 9:39**

You do the LSAT, you do good enough to know you should be considered, but then you have this whole idea of I could get rejected. Yes. What was that like to cope with that idea of, if I really try this, I might not get in the door cuz they might reject me? What was it like for you to have that in your mind?

**Guest:** 9:59

That was easier because I've been rejected in so many other ways. Before I decided to go to law school, I was just trying to find a job. And I live in an area where if you don't have a Master's or a PhD, you're not going to get even a basic job. I was getting turned down for part-time secretarial work because I didn't have a masters. I was being rejected all the time. Being rejected because law school wasn't appropriate for me, I was okay with that. I was okay to toss my hat in the ring. It didn't feel personal.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 10:29

So, it's interesting cuz I do think in this idea of adulthood II, when we ask this question, Who Am I now? We are sturdier at handling rejection. You are trying to get a part-time secretarial job and it's not happening. When you were 21, right? Yeah. That could have been devastating.

**Guest:** 10:46

It would've been devastating. But then I had lived through four teenagers. There's lots of rejection going on.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 10:52

And that is Bateson's whole thing. We have so much to offer. Because of our experience, because of our sturdiness. When it comes to mental wellness we are sturdier in our fifties and sixties than we are in our teens and twenties. Yes. So you could move forward in, I'm going to try this, but if I get rejected, it's not personal.

**Guest:** 11:17

My approach was just I will apply everywhere and see how it goes.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 11:24

What was it like to write the essays for your application?

**Guest:** 11:27

It was so difficult because I didn't have typical resume fodder. I didn't have work experience type things to write about in my essay. My daughter helped me a lot with that.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 11:43

Remember any of the essays you wrote? What was one about?

**Guest:** 11:47

I wrote many essays that I got rid of, but I ended up writing an essay that would make them want to meet me so that I could get to the next step of the interview. That was my daughter's advice. She's just written about you and who you are in a way that makes them go I really want to meet this person.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 12:05

Wow. What was the focus of that?

**Guest:** 12:07

It's a long story, MJ. It's going into my 12 years on the road as a member of a band, right? And all that entailed and pulling out stories, little stories that happened, that showed reasoning and negotiation skills and things like that.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 12:26

You don't have the traditional internships. I worked at a law firm things for the essay. You basically have a whole life.

**Guest:** 12:33

Yes. And it's hard to narrow in on that cuz it's like it's a life.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 12:38

How interesting that your daughter, who was probably around 26 or 25 at the time, is helping you because she has that lens. Yes. She's closer to what they want. Yes. How beautiful that you listen to her.

**Guest:** 12:54

Yeah.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 12:54

Wow. I love that. I think that's just really amazing because you're talking about crossing all these different divides. Being in your fifties, crossing the divide into law school, which is probably typically 25 year olds. So did you get in?

**Guest:** 13:12

I got in everywhere.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 13:13

That's so great. OH my gosh.

**Guest:** 13:17

I got interviews everywhere and then I got in everywhere, and then it was an option of just who gave me the best scholarship. It was awesome.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 13:24

Wow. So, do you remember what it felt like when you got your first acceptance?

**Guest:** 13:28

Yes. I was so excited. It was this terrible school across the country, and I was so excited. I called my daughter right away and she said, "OH, you are not going there. "I was like, but they accepted me.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 13:44

Wow.Yeah.How many did you get into?

**Guest:** 13:46

I don't remember how many I applied to, but it was at least nine or10.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 13:50

I think it's really inspiring because we look at those words of withdraw or engagement. It is so easy to want to withdraw in our fifties. It's so easy to say,oh,I've done everything I can career wise or hobby wise or community wise. Just to engage and to have that kind of success, which you could not have known, you would've had.

**Guest:** 14:12

Can I ask you about that? Because I can't imagine what withdraw means.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 14:17

That says more about you as a person. Because I know a lot of people who withdraw. I know a lot of people who, they get close to50,they're bored in their career, they would like to do something else, and they're afraid to try. They're afraid,oh,I can't make the same money, or it would be so much effort to try something new. Years ago, I was at a swimming pool and my favorite high school teacher was there. He was phenomenal. And it had been25years since I had him. And I said, "how are you? "He goes, "OH, I'm really good right now. We got a new principal.From50to59,I just went in every day, taught the same thing I'd been doing and came home. "This principal said to me, you've gone stale. I'm going to send you to an institute to get you excited about teaching, to help you update. Because you're teaching like you did to kids in the seventies, and I need you to be teaching to kids in the nineties. "And he said, "I was always going to retire at62.I'm66,I'm going strong."

**Guest:** 15:28

Wow.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 15:29

I don't think that the withdrawal is a conscious thing. For most people, I think it just happens as we age. Unless we intentionally say, I'm not going to have it happen. Or

unless you're someone like you that you're in the Lifelong Learners Club. So, you never really thought, the fact that you had to ask me the question says it all, right.

**Guest:** 15:52

Yeah.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 15:53

What was it to walk into class the first day?

**Guest:** 15:57

It was really scary in a strange way. Obviously I'm not concerned about being the most popular person or anything, but I didn't know how they would feel about having someone their mom's age there. I felt like an interloper.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 16:11

How long had it been since you had been in the classroom?

**Guest:** 16:14

30years.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 16:15

30years?Yeah.Like college,right?Yes.Yes.Can you remember that first week or two sitting in the class what it felt like?

**Guest:** 16:23

Everyone was so welcoming. They treated me like just anyone else. It was really wonderful. I loved every minute of it.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 16:32

What did you learn about that generation that you couldn't have learned had you not been in school with them?

**Guest:** 16:38

It's hard cuz they are my kids 'age.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 16:39

They're millennials. They're the end of the millennials. Correct.

**Guest:** 16:42

I've had insights into them otherwise. I wasn't the only older person. There were other people who were in their thirties, but they divide up the older people so that they don't see each other because they're trying to spread us out, a few black people in each college, a few old people in each college like that.Yeah.Yeah.I didn't know that the other



people were there for a long time. I don't feel like I was learning about them because of my kids, but I was seeing they had so much more to do than I did. They were worried about how each person of the same sex felt about them. Some of them were looking for lifelong partners. They had a lot going on and what they were wearing, if it was stylish, just all of this stuff that I didn't have to deal with. So, I realized I was really lucky.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 17:26

I could say it's like legally blonde without the short skirts, the dogs, or any of those kinds of concerns.

**Guest:** 17:32

Without the concerns, but how would you know? I wasn't wearing a short skirt.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 17:36

I don't know that. I've never seen you in a short skirt. So, it's just a guess. It's just a guess. Definitely if you went back in a short skirt, I'm all about it. Good for you. What was the hardest part?

**Guest:** 17:47

The hardest part was about two months in they do this very kind thing. So, law in law school, you get one exam a semester, your entire grade is based on that one exam and participation, none of that counts at all. It's all, live or die. It's not curved. There's one person that does well and then the next. I was fine with that I thought. And then about two months in, they give you a practice exam so that you can get the feeling for what that's going to be like. We had a review session for the practice exam. The practice exam would have absolutely no point. We had only learned eight weeks' worth of stuff. It was not a big deal, but we did the review session. And the things that the professor expected us to know and be able to regurgitate or to structure the way he expected us to write the essays for the final threw me into a panic attack. I had no idea what he was talking about. These things that we had been discussing for all of this time, it was suddenly foreign and I did not have the big picture. So, I stood up in that first review session and I walked out of the room and I went to the bathroom and I was just sobbing. I had never had a panic attack and I found out later I was having a panic attack because I was sure there was no way I was going to be able to do this. That was the first time I felt like I was afraid that I would fail. I hadn't really thought, I was afraid that I would fail until then. But my body told me, oh, you're terrified you're going to fail.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 19:26

So, what'd you do?

**Guest:** 19:27

I walked out the door and went straight to mental health services. And I saw someone right away as I was leaving, there was a line of people from my review session waiting, so I wasn't alone.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 19:40

Again, you would never have done that at 21. No. Yeah, it's as terrifying as it is, and panic attacks are terrifying. That's the beauty of getting gold eyes' always think we do our best work in our fifties and sixties because if you were in your twenties, you might have gone home and done Netflix for five days or smoked pot and escaped forever. But you just went and got help. What did the person say to you?

**Guest:** 20:10

I was trying to remember, because I knew we were going to talk about this. Yeah. And I can't remember, but I remember the feeling of I was being attacked and they told me I was not being attacked. My body had gotten into a loop where it was sure that it had to flight, fight or flight. And I just needed to feel my fingers, ground my feet, breathe and just keep going through it. I had to know that it wasn't actually happening and just stay. Maybe that's why I never thought of that, maybe that's why my mental wellness is being able to stay in the moment. I never thought of it that way. So when it happened again later, I could feel it starting and I could stop it right away because I knew, oh, my body thinks I'm being attacked, but I'm not. And just scared everything's okay.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 20:59

Oh, that's great. Yeah. I'm sorry you had that. That's not great. Thank you. But I think it's so incredible that you just went over to mental health services. Yeah. How did you gain the confidence after that, that I can do this?

**Guest:** 21:12

It really helped to see the long line of people waiting to see the counselor acting because once I realized I wasn't alone, when I went back to the next review session in a different class, I was able to be a support to other people who started freaking out, cuz that was their first review. I started talking to people more and realizing, okay, we're all terrified of this. My, my daughter always said it's hazing law school is just hazing. So yeah. So yeah, I got perspective,

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 21:38

Is it hazing or is it intellectual development?

**Guest:** 21:43

Both. Part of it is just hazing. Part of it is my law school experience was miserable and darn it, yours is gonna be too okay. But it is exactly what lawyers need to be able to do on the spot. This cold calling and everything. So it has a purpose, but it doesn't need to be the way it's done. It's done without love.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 22:04**

If they did it with love, what would they do differently?

**Guest: 22:06**

They wouldn't humiliate you when you didn't know immediately, when you couldn't write that second, say the right thing, they wouldn't humiliate you and move on to the next person. They'd stay with you and give you a moment, say something helpful. Because in reality in court you can take a moment. So take a breath and go, okay. That's what I mean.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 22:26**

When I think of mental wellness, one of the things that I often say is I like people to think about is this being done from a place of love or fear? It's interesting because you said that their process was to scare you, basically. So if they're humiliating you, the fact that you went into a panic attack is not surprising.

**Guest: 22:50**

Gotcha. Okay.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 22:52**

It's interesting because what you said was you became the antidote in the next class. Once everybody understands this is pretend fear, don't take it so seriously. People can get back to a mentally more well place. It's still hard. It's still demanding, but it doesn't need to cause panic attacks. Part of mental wellness is understanding that dynamic, that there are situations, there are people who provoke fear for whatever the reason is. Parents can do that. From beginning of time, parents have parented using fear, and that's a very different interaction with a child than when it comes from love. You can say, Hey, pick up your toys, I'm gonna break your arm. That's scary. Dramatic. Yes. Or you or you can say, it's really important that you take good care of your toys and put 'em away. Can you do that please? That's empowering. If you're not doing it for me, you're doing it to take care of your toys, please do it.

**Guest: 23:57**

So a law school professor would be, if you can't pick up your toys right this second, you're not good enough to be alive and you should just leave.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 24:06**

That's one of the helpful hints about mental wellness. We don't have control of law school professors. No, but we have control of how our mind reacts to law school professors. We don't have to always know how to have control, but we do have the power to go to the mental health center, ask for help, get the skills. It's all easy skills. It was free. You can touch your fingertips anytime you want. You can ground your feet. It's notice on the outside. That's what I taught a couple episodes ago. I think that's an amazing story and one that shows why hiring people in their fifties and sixties and training people

and accepting them into graduate schools is awesome. What did you learn about yourself when it came to your intellectual ability?

**Guest:** 24:56

That I can do anything that I put my time into. I just treated it like a job and I studied hard and then I stopped at night and on the weekends. When we got our first grades back, I did really well and that just gave me a whole bunch of confidence, but it also gave me a whole bunch of compassion for the people who didn't, just because they didn't understand how to respond. It wasn't that they didn't understand the material and then people were like giving up and that made me really sad. The second semester, a lot of people didn't come back. Not because they weren't allowed to, but because they gave up on themselves. Starting with the second semester, I started really reaching out to people who weren't understanding but it was a hard line because I didn't want to mom people. I had to do it as a classmate and not as a mom. But once I felt that I can do it and I can help other people do it, then it just became so empowering. I just became like a leader of all the different things. So it was really good.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 25:58

You're answering the question, Who am I? And you're getting good grades, but the 25-year-old who's always gotten straight A's and Who am I, is I'm a great student and they're getting C's, asks them and gives them the opportunity to develop resilience. I'm still in law school. I can still be a lawyer. Everybody can't be at the top of their class, but they didn't have the resilience to continue. They probably had the smarts.

**Guest:** 26:23

Because everything leads you to believe that if you're not at the top of your class, you won't be able to get a job after, and then you're wasting a lot of money. There's a lot of ways to be a lawyer. You don't have to be the top of the class.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 26:35

So you graduate and you start looking for jobs. What was that like?

**Guest:** 26:40

In law school you start looking for jobs all the time. It's important in your summers, to have a prestigious job. And then their second one, that job that you get your after your second summer is supposed to be the job that you go into when you graduate. You are interviewing for that job, beginning your first year, trying to get that job for your second year so that you'll have a job after college, after law school. I found that while those big law jobs liked me and I fit all of their profile, none of them would hire me. They'd all interview me, but they would not choose me. They wanted the 20-year olds, they wanted people they could mold. And I tried to tell them, I'm very moldable. Look, I'm here. But Right. They weren't buying it. That was devastating because then I thought, I can't do the thing that I want to do. I wanted to do the really hard law the difficult concepts, and I wasn't gonna be allowed to, I wasn't gonna be able to get those jobs. That was really

disappointing.I just went with what I could do every time and I found out it's really interesting at every level.It's really interesting and difficult and fun.So turned out okay.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 27:54

Then life busts the myth.Yeah.The idea that the culture gives you law school gives you is the only valuable law is the corporate law.Big firms.Yes.And what have you found out?

**Guest:** 28:10

I found out that wasn't true.And also the people who go to big law were pretty miserable,and most of my classmates have changed jobs at least once,and it's only been two years since we graduated.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 28:22

Tell us what you do.

**Guest:** 28:23

I work in trust and estates,which is an area I did not think I would go into because it sounds really boring.But I work at a amazing firm.They're wonderful,they're loving,they have a work-life balance,like normal people.I'm expected to do my very best and to think like a lawyer.I don't know how to say it.There's no shame if you make a mistake,of course it's a huge deal because you can't make mistakes in law,but if you make a mistake everyone's around you to help you fix it.I can relax.I now have a grandchild I can take time to go visit.It's really been a blessing the way it's all worked out.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 29:03

What do you think you've learned about mental wellness by pushing yourself to do all this,which you didn't have to do.

**Guest:** 29:13

I think learning how to handle panic attacks was huge.Just being able to trust that there's more than one way to get anywhere.To keep pushing through.I have Alzheimer's runs in my family very strongly.Doing this mind work I think is really healthy for my brain too.But mental wellness,I just think I'm even more resilient now,which is weird cause I think I was pretty resilient

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 29:40

Resilience is no different than physical exercise.If you don't use it,you lose it.

**Guest:** 29:47

That's a good point.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 29:48

And one of the things that I really try to encourage people to do,In every decade is take the kind of risk that you took.It doesn't necessarily have to be graduate school,but it can

be something that they really wanted to learn.Maybe it's piano,maybe it's building something.I have a client in her seventies who's learning Japanese.I think that we underestimate mostly because we're just in the second third generation of people who have lived to be fairly vital after60and70.It's one of the reasons I wanted to do this episode with you,to ask people to think in a more broad way.I think we can get very passive in a culture that has so much entertainment and we can stop learning.I don't know if going to law school prevents Alzheimer's,but it definitely will make your brain healthier.

**Guest:** 30:45

Absolutely.And I'm always learning new things now,which is wonderful.Just as part of my job.There's something new every day.And things like this I would not have done this podcast with you MJ.I love you,but I would not have done this before.I would've been too,I don't know,scared.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 31:02

I asked because I really think that we need everybody in this country to continue learning.Yeah.We can't have it stop at18or22or for the few who go to grad school.We need cross-generational learning on city boards,common councils,school boards.We need all generations.there's so many ways to learn and those are all civic duties that ask people to learn a lot.I'm interested in your husband's role in all this.

**Guest:** 31:36

My husband was amazing.First he said,when I was applying to all those schools all over the country,he said,that's fine.You can go wherever you wanna.I will take care of everything.And then when I finally ended up going to school right near home,which was wonderful.He would bring me meals at school.He did everything.He took over all cleaning,all cooking.My poor classmates would be eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches if they remembered to buy food.He just supported me in every possible way.Always gave me all of the time I needed the space.He kept our social lives going,buying all the Christmas presents and all of the things that life needs.I didn't have to do any of that for three years.It's wow.He was just amazing.Yes.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW:** 32:21

Again,for people who are with the same partner for decades,this is about engagement.That he was willing to follow you to follow your career aspirations.You followed his and he probably found different parts of himself that had laid,underdeveloped,dormant.I just think we underestimate our ability to grow,to change,whether it's in a marriage,whether it's professionally,whether it's in a community.I think it's awesome that he stepped into the role of the support person.

**Guest:** 32:59

And emotional support too.Of course.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 33:02**

An emotional support spouse. Anything else that we left off?

**Guest: 33:06**

Oh, so many things, but I can't think of them now.

**MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 33:08**

Thank you so much for doing it. It was fabulous. Wow. I found that incredibly inspiring. Here are my Inner Challenge insights: Insight number one: We've come a long way, baby! Today's guest's words, "I had an unfair advantage because I had a daughter in law school who called me every day and said, 'Mom, you would love this!'" The same daughter who saw her mom's potential when she told her mom that her first acceptance was beneath her brilliance. This and I state emphatically, is not an unfair advantage. This, my dear guest, is your birthright. To be seen by one person in this world for the brilliance that you happily put on hold so you could raise her and her siblings. The brilliance that you tucked away on a shelf, while you had an adventure of a lifetime traveling around the world, playing music, your husband's and children's dream, not yours. Your brilliance that may never have had the chance to ripen without this daughter support. When the daughter cheers on the mother, we can all say, we've come a long way, baby. Insight number two: Many years ago, a childhood friend of mine said something to me in my thirties. Life is long. I truly had never even thought about that statement. When she said it to me, my world shook and my life mantra went from, I can do it all. To I can do it all, over a lifetime. I began to reprioritize. I had two criteria. The first was to prioritize doing those things that would not be there for me in 20 years. So, I scaled back my professional ambitions. I coached the Little League Baseball, volunteered at my children's school and made family dinner a priority. Perhaps, my biggest sacrifice because I don't really like to cook. The second was to help create a family schedule that did not piss me or my other family members off. Or how does running around from one activity to another. Professionally, I call this family attunement, but the gauge was always do I feel angry inside? Are my kids melting down because we're just doing too much? With a bit of luck, life will be long. And all of us, in the many decades to come, can fit in what is really important. Insight number four: It is not easy at any age to try something new. It's interesting how quickly our minds get settled into, I am this way or he or she is that way. It isn't surprising that my guests, family, and friends listened to her contemplate going to law school for a year without loudly saying, "you go girl!" As we age, we lose lots of things: hair, eyesight, flat stomachs, good night's sleep but maybe the thing we lose the most is our imagination. Our ability to imagine ourselves, someone we love or even the world differently. Give this some thought. Where does our imagination go? Insight number five: In adulthood II, the strength is engagement and the weakness is withdrawal. Don't you want to be more like today's guest who needed me to explain to her what it meant to a withdraw? Insight number six: What if true resilience is navigating the false messages we get about the importance of being number one? Insight number seven: I am not a lawyer, but the age discrimination, our guest today experienced seems against the law to me. Just saying. Insight number eight: My favorite line of the whole episode is the wisdom

my guests shared when she was being turned down for jobs because the firms did not think a woman in her fifties would be as moldable as someone in their twenties. See insight, number seven. What did my guests say that was so wise? She said, "I just went with what I could do every time. And I found out it's really interesting at every level." Does it take us 50 years of living to step into what is instead of what should be? Insight number nine: It doesn't take a therapist to say there are much better ways to train lawyers than inducing panic attacks. I rest my case, your honor. Thanks for listening. Turn inward and have the guts to ask yourself. Who am I now? And what do I really want? This is your Inner Challenge.