

Welcome to The Executive Coach for Moms podcast, where we support women who are attempting to find balance and joy while simultaneously leading people at work and at home.

I'm your host, Leanna Laskey McGrath, former tech exec turned full time mom, recovering perfectionist and workaholic, and certified executive coach.

Hello and welcome back to Episode 6! We're about to share the final installment of the 3-part series where my friend, Andrea Palmer, is interviewing me as I share my story about my career and transition to motherhood, so if you haven't caught episodes 4 or 5, I would definitely recommend going back and giving them a listen.

We left off when I had just left my executive job and transitioned to my new position of Chief Learning & Development Officer for a future CEO, aka full time mom for my almost 2 year old daughter. And in today's episode, I'm going to be talking about how challenging it was for me to give up the identity I'd held for so long as a workaholic business leader.

One thing I notice as I reflect on this conversation is the importance of noticing and managing our thoughts, because what I notice as I listen to this episode is that when I transitioned to my career pause, after the honeymoon period wore off, I was right back to holding myself to the unrealistic expectations I had of myself as a working mom that I talked about in Episode 4, and beating myself up when I didn't meet them. I had changed my circumstances, but it wasn't until I changed my thoughts that I was really able to change my overall experience. A lot of times, we believe that it's the circumstances that we're in that are causing our stress, but actually, circumstances are neutral and it's our thoughts about those circumstances that determine our experience. So, I just found that really interesting.

Also, a lot of times when I'm writing episodes, I'll brainstorm a bunch of thoughts and then throw them into chat GPT and ask it to summarize this for me, and it's fun to see what it comes up with. I tried it with this episode's transcript and I actually really liked how it summed it up, so I'll share that.

It said: In summary, Leanna's journey as a full-time mom has been marked by a shift in expectations, self-discovery, and personal growth. She has learned to let go of all-or-nothing thinking and embrace the imperfections of everyday life while striving to be the best version of herself for her daughter.

I just love that! And by the way, I definitely have not totally let go of all or nothing thinking, but I'm working everyday to consciously move more and more away from it and embrace the grey area in between. Andrea asks me at the end how I've changed through this experience, and I talked about a few things that came to me in that moment, but I'll definitely share more about that in future episodes.

Alright, that's enough of the spoiler alerts! Now, let's get onto the show. I really hope you enjoy hearing about this part of my story!

Andrea Palmer

So did you just fully dive into that and never look back? Or did you have any kind of emotions or processing related to losing that part of your life?

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:18:55

Both because I was so excited. And I think that at the beginning I was very my thought was like, I'm gonna plan out our days I like I remember like buying curriculum for two year olds. I was like, I am going to like we're going to have you know, this structured learning and everyday is going to be amazing. And so I kind of went into it with like, these expectations that I remember my very first day was like the perfect day, my very first day after it was like January beginning of January, because my last day of the job was like and you know, somewhere mid December before the holiday break. And so yeah, that my like first official day of like, my husband being back to work and me being on full time mom and I it was a perfect day and I was like oh my God every day It'll be like this.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:20:00

And it's funny, as I was kind of preparing for this conversation, I was listening back to a coaching session that I had done around that time, where I talked about this day it was it was right after the that, right after I started. And and I was talking about, like, how can I be present all the time. And so what I did at the beginning, I think, was just transfer the thought that like, I need to go all in, I need to be perfect at this, from trying to do two things to now I think I had this mindset of like, now I'm all I was just one thing. And I'm going to be the perfect mom. And I'm going to be fully present with my daughter all the time, because I'm not going to have all this other stuff to worry about. And it's going to be amazing. And so I think that lasted for a few days or weeks. Write that like euphoria of the excitement of something new.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:21:00

And then like kind of reality settled in where it was like, okay, like everyday is not perfect, because I'm still living my human life where it's 50/50. And I'm, you know, we're having a great time sometimes and not great times, other times. And so, I think like, in the back of my mind, I was like, but I'm not working like, but I'm not doing my job. So it kind of saved me through for a while. But I still had a babysitter come in, I think one or two days a week, so that I could do my coaching, like be coach, so I could do my therapy, so I could just have some time to myself. And that was really important. Yeah, it was really important, I highly recommend it, you know, if it's affordable, and you know, able to fit in the budget, it was wonderful.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:21:48

So just to be able to kind of, again, focus on me, because I think I saw and still see, my job is like to support my daughter. And so the, I want to do that from the best place possible. And so I want to kind of be the best version of myself. And so focusing on me, is really important to me. So I still do that. But it got a lot harder because we actually decided to move and also are we lost, we lost that nanny, that babysitter, so we had some childcare changes. And then and then we relocated from Texas to Pennsylvania, packed up a house and built a house, you know, all things, I really don't know how I would have done all of that. sold a house. I don't know how I

would have done all that if I was also working full time. But so I think there was a bit of time in there where that kind of fell off a bit. And then you know, and then came back. So.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:22:53

So I think some of the things I had planned on doing like launching this podcast, for example, and relaunching my business were delayed a little bit more than I had initially planned on. But which is fine it all, it was all like positive changes in our lives. It was just, it took a lot of work to kind of like, right, like, relocate across the country and set up a new house and everything like that. But, and then in terms of like mourning, the loss of identity. I don't think I remember meeting people in those first few months or like even just taking my daughter to a doctor's appointment and meeting a new doctor or something. And they would always ask what do you do? And I had a really hard time with it with answering that question.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:23:48

Because I was like how do I describe what I do? Because I you know, like, I'm a full time mom. And I don't know if I'm like ready for that to be my full time identity right now my own identity. And I think that the concept the term, not a big fan of the term stay at home mom. Honestly, I was home a lot more when I was working than I am when I'm a mom because I would go out all the time but I yeah, I just I didn't want I was not ready to wear that jacket, that coat. I was not ready to join that club. And so yeah, I would say like, well, I'm taking a break from my executive job, you know, or like something where it was clear, like, I'm focusing on her full time but like it's just temporary. Like add those qualifiers.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:24:48

And so it definitely took some time to to drop that, you know, to really like step into okay, I'm a full time mom and That's my finger. I would say like I'm focusing on her right now. That kind of thing. So, so yeah. And there was some morning needed. But, you know, I mean, I think the reality is, is anytime that you have a major life transition, like I moved across the country several times, you know, I went from West Virginia, to California to Florida, to Texas, and to Pennsylvania and all in all of those, there's always it's, it's 5050, right? It's all you're always sad about it and mourning what you're leaving behind, and also simultaneously excited about it, my daughter, and I talk all the time about how we can feel two emotions or more at the same time. And I think that's, that was what was going on for me, right? Like, I was feeling really excited and really happy about my new life. And I was kind of like mourning, the loss of the old Leanna as well. And also, as you can tell, really just applying old piano to new life, like the perfection of concepts and things like that, that took a lot of time to work through.

Andrea Palmer 1:26:08

Yeah, and it sounds like your daughter probably has a great emotional intelligence as a result of you being able to be around more and spend time and, and focus on it and develop her as a human, kind of like you were doing with your staff, I guess in the past, right. You talked about developing the team and the people on your team.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:26:26

Yeah. Yes. Yeah, well, we just had her parent teacher conference last week. And that was one of the big things that her teacher said was about emotional intelligence. So yeah, that's something that I'm really, I guess proud of. And also, I don't know, just like, I think it's really important to me that I equip her as best as I can to be able to navigate the world. And to kind of define success on her terms, and go out and get what she wants,

Andrea Palmer 1:27:15

The most feminist concept of them all.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:27:18

Well, and I think that's what I ended up coming to, whenever I made that decision was a, I think, what the women who fought for us to have, you know, equal representation and rights was not so that we would be doing something that we were, where we weren't feeling totally fulfilled, or like, it wasn't totally in alignment with our values, but for us to have the choice. Right. And so that was kind of where I landed with that was that I am honoring these women, who fought for us by making the choice that most aligns with my values. And I truly want and be, like you said, I mean, being able to set her up, to be able to, you know, I think one of the things that we focus on a lot, is helping her identify, like her inner compass and focus on, you know, not focus on external validation, I think the way that we raise our children has a lot of external validation, a lot of praise, a lot of consequences.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:28:29

And so, therefore, like, we learn to look outside ourselves for our answers, and whether or not we're doing what we should be doing, quote, unquote. And so I think, something that we focus on all the time, and a lot is really like helping her to tune into herself and like, what she's feeling how her body's feeling about, like reacting to something. And to be able to make her own decisions and decide what she's comfortable with. Right and not necessarily do whatever someone else is telling her to do, or doing something for reward or doing something to avoid a punishment, but that she is learning to have that kind of internal motivation and and be able to like be in touch with her own inner compass to make her

Andrea Palmer 1:29:24

Yeah. Next on your list should be a parenting podcast. So anything changed majorly in you, since you're kind of, you know, full time in this new role, and you've been doing it for years, and you're kind of, you know, starting on this even next chapter of digging into what you'd intended to when you first made the leap.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:29:50

Yeah. I think so much has changed. Whenever I was listening to that. coaching session record Writing of me from two years ago, I was like, Oh my gosh, I'm just such a different person. Now I have a much different perspective. I think that kind of all or nothing thinking, you know, our the way that we are talked about the way we're socialized, like the way that we're raised, right, we are, it is influenced by our biology by our upbringing, and you know, and who's around us and our parents and our families and friends and things, and also just by society, teaching us like,

what we what's right, what's wrong, what we, you know, based on whatever standards are arbitrarily set.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:30:45

And I think that I would say, I, I have, I guess it comes a little bit back to that confidence, but I think I have a much better I don't want to say this. I think I trust myself a lot more than I used to. And I listen to myself a lot more. Rather than, you know, like, looking to everybody else for my answers. I think I also, I would call myself a recovering perfectionist, so I don't think I've shed that completely. And I don't think I want to because I think there are, there's gems in everything right. And so I don't want to fully shed that desire for greatness. But I have realized that something doesn't have to be perfect to be really great. And that kind of all or nothing, thinking, I think that what I have realized over the past few years is that there's so much more goodness in the middle.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:32:09

So initially, when I initially left, and I was about to start full time, Momming, I was like, I gotta be present 100% of the time, right? Always be there and holding myself to that standard. And then I realized, like, first of all, like, that's not possible, a be like, That's not fun. Right? Like, it's not fun to like, try and force myself there. And so I think that I, you know, I've kind of I've kind of like, learn to accept that, we're going to have good days and bad days, we're going to have it's kind of like riding the waves a little bit more, I guess I would say like going, just kind of going with it. And it was like, I think when I had my daughter, I had to relinquish control. But like I wasn't ready to I was still like, gripping it as tightly as I could. And I think at this point, it's, it's much more like, hey, let's just like get on this surfboard and like, ride it together and figure it out as we go.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:33:19

And I think I'm a lot more comfortable with, just like navigating each day as it comes. Rather than like thinking it has to be a certain way. And planning for that. And then when it doesn't go that way, being like, totally shattered, and disappointed. And, you know, being really hard on myself. Another thing that I was actually just thinking about the other day is that I've done a lot as I've done a lot of work, a lot of like internal personal work, I've continued my therapy and my coaching through this time, which I think has been really beneficial to feeling like I am an effective parent, and effective partner and an effective, just like the more the person that I want to be and show up as. And so I think that perfectionist mindset had me doing a few different things. One was that like when I would look at someone I admired, I just assumed – I would put them on a pedestal and assume that they had a perfect life. And I think I've realized like, oh wait, nobody, like nobody has a perfect life.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:34:31

And I think I knew that before but like I didn't believe it. And I think the other thing is that I always tried to build my identity around my best days, my best self, and only put that forward and kind of like almost no I'd acknowledge the bad stuff about myself. Right? So I was like, yeah, like, that was just an off day or like, right, like I would, I was like, I just like, didn't want to own it, I would only, I was only willing to own the good stuff. And I think I have spent a lot of time

like, sitting with the quote unquote bad stuff about myself, like what I would previously have termed bad stuff. Like sitting with it, and just learning to accept that about myself. So yeah, I mean, and I think it comes to like self love.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:35:41

And so that has been, that has been a huge growth, there's been so much growth, honestly, I think, as a parent, and just like, recognizing that I can do all the things, I could do all the things perfectly to my standards, and my daughter is going to be who she is, and right, like, I can't control another person. And so I think like letting go of the expectation of perfectionism for myself, and just like showing up, as best I can, at any given moment, hopefully will teach her, show her how to have grace for herself whenever she's not showing up the way that she wants to, right. Because like, again, like, we're humans, we're not perfect. And we don't show up as the perfect versions of ourselves all the time. That's something else I've learned, I could probably do a whole podcast on all the things I've learned, if I, because it's been, yeah, it's been such a huge, a huge time of growth for me.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:36:59

So I think now I'm really excited to kind of share that with other women, especially women who are doing the mom thing and doing the work thing and trying to balance it all. Because I definitely did not have the time. Or I should say, I did not make the time for a lot of personal growth when I was working and parenting full time. And so I'm hopeful that like, the things that I have learned and that I continue to learn, because I'm on the journey, I'm not finished. I'm not there. I hope that I can share those things, and that they can be helpful to women as they are navigating, because I know not everybody wants to step out of the workforce and be a full time mom. And not everybody has the option of doing that either. And so I think that for those women, who are trying to be an amazing mom and being amazing at their jobs, I hope that I can offer something to them, both through this podcast and through coaching.

Andrea Palmer 1:38:14

And having someone to talk through that with is always incredibly helpful in a non judgmental space and accepting your whole self and everything like that. So I guess when I first started talking to you about it, I didn't know what it is. And there's probably even still gray area. What is coaching in this in this perspective?

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:38:35

Yeah. Well, it's interesting, because I think we have so as a society, we have so many different roles that are called coach, right? Like, they're sports coaches. And so a lot of times when we hear coaching, we think like, oh, so like you, you teach soccer. A life coach. Yeah. And so there's live coaching and their health coaches and executive coaches. And so there are lots of different ways of coaching. So I'm not saying that, like, the way I define it is "the way" it's just, the coaching that I do is just kind of sitting down together and looking at something that's going on for you, and, and just kind of like being very curious about it, being that kind of third party person, you know, those third party eyes looking at something. So like, when I talked about, I talked about a lot of the stories that I've had over time, and we all have these stories.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:39:39

And we just kind of accept them as fact, because our brain has come up with these stories and then isn't going to be the one to challenge them. And so I think having somebody else to talk through it and then you kind of say a story, or something that you see as fact, and that you may not even realize, right that you're seeing, as fact. And I think, you know, having someone there to talk through it and kind of say like, Okay, well, that's interesting, you know, and, and then we can kind of dive into, like, where did that come from? And is that a story you want to keep, and you know, and kind of do, then you can kind of more consciously decide. And so I think coaching really helps to find insights about our ways of thinking, and then allow us to make conscious decisions about how we want to think and how we want to live our lives.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:40:42

So coaching has helped me immensely as I've talked about, you know, this really helped me helped me to make the decision to leave and then, you know, has helped me over the years just to continue to learn about myself and to replace stories that are just not very helpful, and stories that I don't actually believe. But like, I don't even realize they're just kind of on autopilot in my subconscious. And to kind of bring them to the forefront, and then decide what I want to believe. And I think, yeah, it's a process of self self exploration together with another person.

Andrea Palmer 1:41:22

That's awesome. So what's next?

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:41:26

Yeah, so I have been coaching now, for the past several months. And it's been really fun to coach, I've been coaching, mostly women who are kind of where I was. And you know, who have, as we talked about, we are having babies a bit later. And so there are more women who are at the executive level, or at a management or, you know, high within the organization and responsible for a lot within the organization. So feeling like the weight of the company is on their shoulders, and then also having the weight of a child, you know, young child on their shoulders as well. And so I've been coaching women there, and it's been so fun for me. And I feel like I have so much to offer there and can can like, genuinely help so.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:42:25

So the women that I've been coaching, it's just been amazing to kind of see their transformation and how they're, you know, how they're able to show up more. I think it was interesting, actually, one of my clients said to me, I was after our first session, she came into our second session and just said, like, since our last session, I have felt like, I've just been enjoying life more like, I've just been enjoying my time with my daughter more. And I'm enjoying work more and like worrying less about all the little things and like working more and, and so it's so rewarding to me to hear that. Because I think that's where I was, I felt like, I liked my work. I love my kid, but I'm not enjoying my life. And I you know, and I wanted to just enjoy life more. And so I my goal really, is to help women who are trying to do things that they really enjoy, and maybe there are

enjoying components of their life, just to be able to enjoy the entire experience a bit more. Just just to live the lives that they want to live. That's amazing. Yeah. So all right.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:43:46

Do you have any more questions, Barbara Walters?

Andrea Palmer 1:43:49

My final question. Yep. What are you most looking forward to, in this, this next chapter of your life.

1:43:58

So my kind of vision for how I want to build my business, is that I want to scale it with my daughter as she gets more involved in school and other activities. So right now, she's in preschool. And so I have, you know, a few days a week or a few hours to coach and work on building my business. And then, you know, she'll go to kindergarten and she'll go to grade school. So I'll have more and more time, like progressively more time as she goes to school more and also gets more involved in different activities. So I will i i want to build a very successful business in that way to one for myself and for our family because I think that's what's best for our family. And to so that I can show other women that it's possible that you know, this is something that they prefer to do if they, you know, I think we should always respect whatever a woman's choices if she wants to work if she doesn't want to work, or if she wants to do?

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:45:09

Well, let me be clear, there's always work involved when there are children. So if she wants to have a job and have kids have kids and focus fully on that, or if she wants to build her own thing, because more and more women, especially moms are building their own businesses so that they can do it on their terms and not, you know, have to have to work somebody else's hours. And so yeah, I want to show that that's possible. And three, to show what's possible for my daughter, I think that she's not that she remembers, per se, but like, in her four years, now, she has experienced me as a, as a working mom, and as a full time mom, and then she'll get to experiencing me as a small business owner, you know, building my company.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:45:58

And so I think it will be, I would just love to, like, show her that it's possible to work and be be a great mom, and do it on my terms, rather than working for somebody else. Because that's kind of always been my goal is to work for myself. So. So yeah, that's kind of what I'm really excited about. And I'm just excited to help women because we deserve it. Because we don't have a lot of support, unfortunately, in our, you know, in the systems and things like that, that are out there for us. So, yeah, I want to I want to help other women who are feeling like they need help and support and who I can help. Awesome. Yeah. Awesome. All right, well, thank you so much. Andrea. This was fun, and my losing my voice, I think a little bit from talking so much.

Andrea Palmer 1:46:58

It's great to learn a little bit more and dig, you know, deeper into your story and how you got where you are and where you're heading.

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:47:05

Thank you. Any last thoughts for me on your end?

Andrea Palmer 1:47:10

No, I I resonate with so much of what you say as I'm sure as many other people out there do and struggling with the different parts of yourself and accepting yourself as that whole person and all of that, that it entails and being different people at different phases of your life and that's totally okay. You know, we're we're meant to grow and evolve and change. And at the end of the day, that's kind of the moral of the story, right?

Leanna Laskey McGrath 1:47:37

Absolutely. Yeah. Awesome. Well, thank you so much for hanging out with me today and talking through all of this and asking great questions, so that I could share my story, and I knew that you would and, and I appreciate it. And thank you to everyone for tuning in. And we will see you next week. Bye.