

MASTERS Audio Club, August 2018
Kelli Davis
Anything Is Possible When You Believe in Miracles



Kelli Davis is a speaker, author, podcast host, and head of celebrity relations for the nonprofit Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals, where she works closely with celebrities to raise funds and awareness.

Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Kelli describes her personal struggles with body dysmorphic disorder, addiction, anxiety, and other challenges that led her to prosper and excel in all she does. Her stories about the lessons she has learned from the hospitals’ Miracle Kids and how they deal with illnesses and struggles will stir passion and motivation in every listener.

Winn: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here. Welcome to a wonderful issue of MASTERS. And this is really going to be a wonderful issue. This one will be powerful. I know that you’re going to want to listen to this over and over again and share it with lots of people. I also like that this is going to transcend in many ways the boundaries of the beauty industry. And although MASTERS was born in the beauty industry, the audience is so much bigger than that and this person is going to send a message that’s going to be profound for many, many people. And I’m so, so grateful ’cause I called her and she said that she would jump on a plane to be here for this and I always like that.

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: Any time that I get to sleep in my own bed. Are you used to being on the road?

Kelli: I do travel a lot but when I heard about this opportunity, I’m like, “Yeah, I’ll get on a plane to be on this MASTERS class.”

Winn: Thank you. This is—I’m sitting here with the incredible Kelli Davis. So Kelli, thank you so much.

Kelli: Well, before we get started I want to thank you. Paul Mitchell students have raised \$1.3 million for the organization that I work for and so I’m just so grateful for the opportunity to be here today.

Winn: You know, our relationships have many layers and I think maybe the best relationships are that way. Yeah, we get to work together but then we also get

to make a difference and raise money and awareness and then we get to do something like this together and, you know, we get to be friends and I just love multi-layer relationships. And you've absolutely helped to make that happen, so thank you.

Kelli: Well, you're welcome and it was so awesome to have you on my podcast, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals' podcast, *Untold Miracles*, and I got to hear about the miracles in your life and wow! Like honestly, like I told you, you like have been my favorite guest on the podcast. The stories and the experiences that you've shared, I learned so much from you that day and hopefully I'll have something to share today that might help someone else—

Winn: I know you will.

Kelli: —like you helped our listeners.

Winn: Well, I've read your story and what's interesting—how long have I known you? It's been—

Kelli: Many, many years. *[laughs]*

Winn: Many years but I had no idea this background story until you and I started chatting a little while ago that you were doing a talk—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —and wanted my input on it—

Kelli: Uh-huh.

Winn: —and then I watched it, I'm like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, start over."

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: "What is this story?" I had no idea the story. So, congratulations and, first of all, what you've been through and the fact that you're willing to share your story. Before we started recording, you said that you're transparent and you're—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —fine to be an open book and share all of this and I think that that's courageous but it's also something that our audience needs to listen to.

Kelli: Yeah, I'm happy to share my story. I've been on a unique journey for the past 20 years. I've struggled with anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, addictions, suicidal thoughts. And it all stems from body dysmorphic disorder. And I don't know if your listeners are familiar with that

but it's a mental disorder where your brain is in a perpetual state of warped reality where you can't see a true perception of yourself and your mind is fixated on your flaws and your imperfections. And that perceived ugliness makes me really not want to get out of bed on a daily basis.

Winn: Now, to tell you the truth, I had not heard of it before.

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: You know, bad on me because—

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: —I pride myself on trying to become as aware and knowledgeable about all kinds of different situations, life experiences that people have, because I want to have that kind heart. I want to be empathetic and compassionate to everybody. And I had never heard of this before. Now, tell our listeners first—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —again, the—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —name of it.

Kelli: It's called body dysmorphic disorder.

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: And actually a lot of men struggle with this mental disorder, as well. And so my least favorite thing that I struggle with is addictive behaviors, and for 20 years I've been digging holes in my face with tweezers and making my face a bloody mess to numb myself out from the feelings of anxiety and despair and depression. And it's been frustrating. I even went to an addiction treatment center for 30 days, called Passages, and it was really an unbelievable experience: I'm checking myself into this treatment center and everybody's heroin addicts and drug addicts. But when you have an addictive behavior in your life and it's controlling you, like you'll do anything to help yourself. And so it was that point where I was so sick of hurting myself that, back in 2010, I went to this treatment center to deal with like the emotional pain. Because every addiction, there's an underlying condition that's causing the dependency to the behavior and once you can figure out what that underlying condition is, you can get help with that behavior. And it's a really holistic approach to treating addiction. It's hypnotherapy, it's acupuncture, it's psychotherapy. And it was a really cool experience and I'm so grateful that I did it. And I still struggle with this behavior to this day but I choose to show up every day. I deal with anxiety. I deal with depression. I deal with suicidal

thoughts every day but I also know that it's a choice; like it's a choice that I can get out of bed every day. It's a choice.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: And it's—I also have the flip side where, in my day job, I work for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals and we treat 10 million kids every year. We help save kids' lives. I meet these kids. These kids are my inspiration to get out of bed every day because I know what they go through.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: I know how hard their journey is. We all have a hard journey but they make the choice to be positive and to show up and to choose to fight every day. And I can do the same.

Winn: Which, we're going to get into the work that you do at Children's Miracle Network Hospitals and we're going to hear more about these miracle stories that you love to share. You're so good at sharing these—

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: —stories because that inspires people. It inspired my organization enough that—

Kelli: Hm.

Winn: —we've donated \$1.3 million *[laughs]* and we're certainly not done anytime soon with that.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: So at what point did dysmorphic disorder show up in your life? At what age?

Kelli: Yeah, really interesting. So when I was in high school—I grew up in Wyoming and I was very athletic and kind of excelled at sports and when I was 17 years old I had to get back surgery. And it was very debilitating. I was down for a year and a half. I had back pain for 15 plus years and that's when I really became consumed with my body and my physical appearance. As soon as I got out of back surgery, I remember I had lost 10 pounds from back surgery and I was so excited and that's when my weight started controlling everything. And so that's when it first started for me.

Winn: Okay. And how did that show up? So it was weight loss and you were—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —excited about that—

Kelli: Yeah, yeah.

Winn: —so you continued on that—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —that spiral of—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —of weight loss?

Kelli: Yeah. And then I went to BYU and I was raised Mormon. I'm still Mormon today but it's a very interesting religion as there's a lot of guilt involved with it, and shame you could say as well.

Winn: I don't think you guys have the—

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: —market on guilt—

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: —so.

Kelli: Right!

Winn: Okay? *[laughs]*

Kelli: I think there are other religions out there that—and so I went to BYU and it was a very interesting experience there. And I just started being focused on like my body and I started like—I just went on a downward spiral of just not feeling good enough and I think that's when it all started is when I was at that university.

Winn: You said that one of the things that you did was you would pick at your face.

Kelli: Yeah, it's really interesting, Winn. I know everyone has crazy things in their life but for me I feel like the hairs in my face are evil. And if I don't get them out I feel like I'm going to die. So it's kind of like a heroin addict where it—

Winn: You know, say that again—

Kelli: That—

Winn: —because—

Kelli: Okay.

Winn: —‘cause I know some people—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —listening to this is like—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —“She should just—”

Kelli: I know, it’s so—

Winn: “—get over it.”

Kelli: I know, it’s so—

Winn: But, you know, you wouldn’t say that—

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: —to somebody who’s a diabetic or somebody—

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: —going through cancer.

Kelli: Right.

Winn: “You know, if they just had a better attitude, they could—”

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: “—kick this cancer thing.”

Kelli: Yeah, believe me, I’ve done so much therapy over the years, Winn. I have to tell you a really funny story because you would think like, *It’s just hairs in your face, how could they be bad?* But, for me, it’s like if they don’t come out—it’s like a high. If I get the hair out, it’s like a fix. It’s like I feel so much better. And so I was seeing a therapist and she’s like, “Like how can we help you with this behavior?” She’s like, “What’s something you really hate?” I’m like, “I hate child sex offenders, like that’s just so horrible.” And she’s like, “Okay, we’re going to write a check to a child sex offender for \$1,000. If you pick your face in the next two weeks, we’re going to send this check.” So I make it one week okay. But about seven days into it I feel like I’m kind of going to die if these hairs don’t get out of my face. But I found a loophole and was like, *Well, somebody else can get the hairs out of my face. Nobody said that somebody else couldn’t get them out.*

Winn: Oh wow.

Kelli: So I go to my friend's house and she can't see the hair to get it out and I start kind of freaking out. And my parents happened to be in town in Salt Lake City that day for something and I ended up going to my parents' house that night. And my dad—I'm like, "Dad, please, can you just get this out of my face?" and he couldn't see it and I went ballistic, like I lost it. I just—like I just went crazy. I'm like, "You have to get this hair out of my face." And my dad said it was just like an act of God that he was able to see it, 'cause he couldn't see it at all but he got it out. And I calmed down and like at that point I just knew I had a problem. Like this behavior was like just controlling my life and it actually still is super impactful. I mean, we all have something, right?

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: That—like something that we feel like is controlling us. And this, unfortunately for me, for some reason these hairs are evil and they have to come out.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: And so I've done a lot of therapy to find out why—I'd even go to Walmart and I'd go buy tweezers and get the hairs out, then throw the tweezers away. It's just been an interesting journey but here's what it's about, Winn: it's about what behavior in your life is numbing you out from the feelings that you don't want to feel.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And that's what this is. Because I have feelings of anxiety and depression from the body dysmorphic disorder and so this is just—this is a very common thing that happens with body dysmorphic disorder is people will dig their skin.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And they'll self-harm.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: It's just—it's just, unfortunately, something that comes with it but, you know what? For me, I'm like, *You know what? This is just something I struggle with on a—*

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: —*daily basis and it's okay.* I can still choose to show up even though I don't want to. Like it's funny 'cause I want to be a motivational speaker and be on stage and be heard but I don't want to be seen.

Winn: Right. Interesting.

Kelli: So it's a very interesting dichotomy, especially in my world of working with celebrities because when I'm working with Jennifer Lopez or Zendaya or whoever it is, like, I'm like, *Why do I have to show up in this space when I really don't want to be seen right now?*

Winn: Right.

Kelli: But it's—I don't like getting out of bed. I don't like getting dressed. I don't like having to show up and be seen but it's what it is. And there are things you can do for body dysmorphic disorder: there's cognitive behavioral therapy, there's mirror retraining you can do, and I just don't let it keep me in bed. I do not let it keep me in bed.

Winn: So how long ago was that when you finally realized, "Okay, there's a problem here." You're telling the story about with—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —your roommate and your—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —dad and going—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —to Brigham Young—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —University.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: When did—how long ago was that?

Kelli: I've known there's been issues for, hmm, probably the last 15 years, yeah.

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: But I've been doing therapy and I believe in miracles, Winn, and so I know that a miracle is possible that there will be one day when this doesn't control my life.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: But it doesn't mean I can't have an amazing life even though I struggle with these things on the other side.

Winn: Right. So does this show up on a daily basis for you?

Kelli: Yeah, every day getting dressed is hard.

Winn: Every single day.

Kelli: Yeah. Yep.

Winn: And I like what you say, that it's a—you choose to show up.

Kelli: Absolutely.

Winn: 'Cause some people—I remember—people say like, “Well, I’ll go to the gym whenever I’m in the mood.” You’ll never go.

Kelli: *[laughs]* Right.

Winn: You—

Kelli: Well—

Winn: —don’t do something just 'cause you feel like it.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: Relationships are like that.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: You know, it’s so easy to be in a relationship when you still have that feeling, that romantic feeling of when you—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —first meet somebody. But, you know, true love happens—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —when, gosh, you’ve been with that person for a while and it’s like you—but you still choose to be loving to that person.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: You still choose to do loving things for them.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: It’s a choice that we make.

Kelli: Hm.

Winn: It's not just, "Well, I feel it today and so I'll show up today."

Kelli: Yeah. Well, and it's not about like—it's—you're focused on your physical appearance but it's not really about that. It's about you just want to feel normal, right? It's just about feeling normal but you're so consumed with a feeling of—it's a perceived ugliness where you just do not want to be seen.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: But you just want to—it's—but—it's hard because I work with all these miracle kids who have physical deformities and I just feel a lot of guilt for this disorder that I have because I see what these children on the other side are going through.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: And I do want to share one story with you, if that's okay.

Winn: Absolutely.

Kelli: I—my life was changed about a year and a half ago when I got to meet Isaiah Acosta. And Isaiah was born without an air passage or a jaw and didn't have oxygen for 15 minutes and doctors said that he would be a vegetable. But today Isaiah is 17 years old and he is inspiring the world with his voice—

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: —by writing rap songs and having rapper Trap House be his physical voice.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And the really interesting thing about Isaiah is that Isaiah could have surgery to get a jaw to look normal like everybody else but he loves himself the way God made him.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: So he doesn't want that surgery. He wants people to see past his physical appearance. So when I heard his story like a year and a half ago, I'm like, *Oh my gosh, I have to meet this kid*. Right? Have to meet this kid because here he is, he has this physical deformity but he loves himself. And so he's been such a good person to have in my life because it's not about the outside, it's about what's inside. And his heart is amazing and he is inspiring the world—

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: —with his voice right now. I mean, his story has been shared millions and millions and millions of times everywhere. We created a six-minute documentary 'cause he shouldn't be alive today.

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: But he is and he looks different and he loves it.

Winn: How would people see that six-minute documentary?

Kelli: Oxygentofly.org.

Winn: Oxygen to—

Kelli: To fly.

Winn: —as in “to”?

Kelli: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Winn: Oxygentofly.org.

Kelli: Yeah. And it's interesting: the way his story started out is kind of a miracle. I was talking to a girlfriend one night on the phone, talking about his story and she's like, “I bet you he has so much inside of him that he would want to share.” And so I texted him that night and I said, “Isaiah, I know you've got a voice inside of there even though you're mute and you have no physical voice. What would you want to say?” So he sent me a blank piece of paper and a pen. He's like, “I'm going to get started.” Like, “I'm writing a song.” A couple hours later I have a few lines and now he's going to release his third song—

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: —this year.

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: First song was called “Oxygen to Fly,” second song was about being bullied, and this third song is amazing, as well. But it all happened just from this conversation with a girlfriend and now he's an influencer. He has thousands and thousands of followers and he's using his voice for good. I was just at the Billboard awards with him a couple weeks ago and—

Winn: I was there, too, I didn't see you.

Kelli: You were?

Winn: No, I wasn't there.

Kelli: Oh! *[laughs]*

Winn: My gosh. *[laughs]*

Kelli: But it was so cool because I reached out to like, you know, all of the big artists to see if they would want to meet him before the awards show that night and Khalid, who was up for several awards that night, met with us beforehand. He's a 20-year-old artist who has his own story of being bullied.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: And he performed two songs that night and he just made the time to be with Isaiah and tell Isaiah how much his story—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: —inspired him. And like—but it's not about like the fame for Isaiah, it's about giving back. Like every week he goes and feeds the homeless.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Like he's—he was always doing these types of things before he had this platform. But—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: —anyway, he's really helped me because here's this kid that, you know, has had a set of challenges and he just, you know, he continues to defy the odds and create miracles for those around him.

Winn: You have a lot of these stories. And I—

Kelli: *[laughs]* I have so many!

Winn: I know! And I want to—

Kelli: I have so many.

Winn: —get into as many as we can cover today. The—'cause I want to make sure that we're sending out a—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —good message—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —because you're right—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —everybody has something.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: And people listening to this, the majority of people suffer with some type of mental illness—

Kelli: Yes.

Winn: —and I what I mean by that is the brain controls the entire body.

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: And the brain sends messages even to people with perfect bodies saying there's something that's not right. And mental illness can show up in the form of addiction or suicidal thoughts or anxiety or bipolar. There's—the list goes on and on. And the majority of people have something that they're suffering with. So I think the more we can come out of the woodwork about this—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: You know, what—how heartbreaking it is that we've lost—

Kelli: Hm.

Winn: —some very, very famous people lately to suicide.

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: And—

Kelli: And unfortunately I get it, like 'cause I've been there and I know what it feels to be—like it would just be so easier to not be here anymore.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: And it's so sad what's happening but I do think talking about it and choosing to show up with love for everyone around us like is helpful.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: Very, very helpful. But I just—I like sharing my story because I know that everyone walking on this planet has something and if I can share something that will give them hope, inspire them, help them believe a miracle is possible in their own life, like I want to share it.

Winn: There was—this was one of the postings following the death of Kate Spade, and which I thought was really profound: “They tell you that everyone is out to get you—” these voices—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: “—that everyone is looking at you—”

Kelli: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

Winn: “—that everyone is judging you—”

Kelli: Hm.

Winn: “—and sadly, the last sentence comes with truth: people do judge those with mental illness. Yet would you judge someone with cancer, with heart disease—”

Kelli: Hm.

Winn: “—immune disorders, a tumor? Would you tell them to just get over it, as though people suffering from mental illness could somehow just wish it away?”

Kelli: Hm.

Winn: “Don’t you think they would if they could? Until the stigma is removed from mental illness, until society truly authentically accepts it as an illness, those suffering will continue.”

Kelli: Hm, wow, that’s profound.

Winn: It was profound.

Kelli: That’s really—that’s really important. And, for me, I relate to that because I have a lot of judgement on myself. Like I’ve been on depression medication for 20 years and I don’t want to be on it but would you tell a diabetic that they shouldn’t take their insulin?

Winn: Right.

Kelli: You know, so I struggle with that ’cause I—it’s not a weakness but I choose it because it helps me on—

Winn: Right.

Kelli: —a daily basis. But I think that stigma needs to go away.

Winn: Well, that’s why we’re talking about it.

Kelli: Yeah. That it is—

Winn: Just a stigma.

Kelli: —something weak. Yeah.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: It's a total stigma.

Winn: So we kind of jumped into this—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —without telling people exactly—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —what you do—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —with Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, which you—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —you've been there for how long? Twenty-two years?

Kelli: Yeah, I started 22 years ago.

Winn: And your title there is you work with—

Kelli: I do celebrity relations, yes.

Winn: Celebrity relations. And so—and just a shout out to you, thank you so much because at our recent event—first of all, Marie Osmond is at all of our events and we just, we love Marie—but we've had John Schneider—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —and this time we had tWitch—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —from the *Ellen* show and we had Miss America and Angelica Hale. You guys, she's that—how—what is she, 10?

Kelli: She's 10.

Winn: Ten years old, who just sings like you wouldn't believe. She was on *America's Got Talent* and so. But you also mentioned working with Jennifer Lopez. There's quite a few celebrities that you work with to help them have a connection with the world of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals to raise money and awareness, and so it's a great thing that you do. 'Cause as we all know, at the end of the day, a celebrity can get done in five minutes what can take you and I months and months to do.

Kelli: *[laughs]* Right! Oh, absolutely.

Winn: So we absolutely—

Kelli: Absolutely have that—

Winn: —leverage every opportunity and resource that we have to get the word out.

Kelli: Yes. So it's actually a miracle kind of how I got the job at Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. I was working in the NFL for the Denver Broncos. It was actually my dream job. Since I was a little girl, I wanted to work for the Broncos and I was told no twice and I ended up just showing up in Denver and asking for the job and I got hired.

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: And so after that first season I got a phone call from someone at Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, his name's Roger Cook. I'd never heard of the organization.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: And I had kind of wanted to move back to Utah and had a prayer around it like and the next day I got a phone call from this guy and he's like, "We want to fly you out," and I'd never heard of this place.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: And I flew out to Holladay, Utah, where our office was and I was living in Denver at this beautiful facility, working in the NFL, and this place is kind of a little dumpy office and I'm like, *Why would I want to go from the NFL to this nonprofit organization?* And I am so grateful, Winn, that I made that decision 22 years ago because in the midst of all of my challenges, I still have an amazing life—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: —because I get to work with these kids on a daily basis. And so, yeah, in 1996 I started working with this organization and we've raised over \$5 billion. We treat 10 million kids—

Winn: Billion, with a *B* people! Listen—

Kelli: Billion—

Winn: —with a *B*!

Kelli: —billion dollars and last year we raised \$389 million and—

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: And so I work with celebrities to help raise funds and awareness for these kids. We help save kids' lives and that's what I get to do on a daily basis. And that's why I love my life.

Winn: There are 170 hospitals?

Kelli: One hundred and seventy hospitals across North America.

Winn: Which is great. You guys, listen up because we all know of other children's hospitals but some of these other children's hospitals are one location. They're one hospital and yet sometimes they can be more famous and well known—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —than what Children's Miracle Network Hospitals is all about. And you serve 10 million children a year?

Kelli: Ten million kids every year. And the miracles that are happening from these nurses and doctors inside these hospitals, it's crazy. Like I just witness it year after year after year after year after year. I see kids walk when they weren't supposed to. I see kids have sight when they weren't supposed to. They live when doctors said they would die. And so when I know a family that's going through something horrible, I believe the best possible outcome is possible 'cause I've seen it.

Winn: Hm. Are you familiar with Gerald Jampolsky?

Kelli: No.

Winn: Love him. He's one of my mentors and he wrote a book called, *Teach Only Love*.

Kelli: Hm-mm.

Winn: And his book is just that: stories of—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —children who are dealing with potentially life-threatening—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —illnesses and yet how they handle it is just so adult. You know, teaching *[laughs]*—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —the adults around them—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —about life lessons—

Kelli: Hm.

Winn: —that normally we don't have a clue.

Kelli: Right.

Winn: So I can imagine what you're experiencing on a regular basis in hearing and learning these stories.

Kelli: Oh my gosh. I, honestly—so one of the best parts of my job is taking these celebrities inside the walls of a children's hospital, and one of the most humbling places you can be is on the cancer floor. And you see these little one-year-olds hooked up to their chemo treatments and you watch their parents and I'm overwhelmed with how is this parent, in this moment, handling this situation? But it's about the child. And how is this child handling this situation? With hope, with courage, with optimism. Like they're just treating it as if, you know, as if nothing's wrong. And so they teach us so much but—

Winn: How *do* they do that?

Kelli: I—

Winn: First of all—

Kelli: I—it's—they—

Winn: —we freak—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —out when—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —Sofia has a little—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —cold.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: Like we're losing sleep.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: We're running to the store. We're—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —making a thousand phone calls.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: How does a parent deal—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —with having a sick child in a hospital hooked up, going through chemotherapy?

Kelli: Well, I know because I have it in my own family. My sister has a child, he's 22 now but he was born with tuberous sclerosis, which means he has tumors all throughout his body. And so he has no language, he's not potty trained, and it's been 24/7 care for my nephew for the last 22 years.

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: And, you know, when her child has a stomach ache or sore throat, he can't tell her. She has no idea what's wrong with him ever. He had to have brain surgery when he was 5 years old. So I think it's just a lot of faith and it's just doing it day by day by day by day, just knowing that it's going to be okay. I mean, somehow my sister—my sister is Wonder Woman. I've never met a more amazing woman in my life than her. But these families just—I don't know how they do it, Winn, but they just—somehow they show up for their child and it's the most beautiful and miraculous thing to witness because these kids need their parents to be strong for them. And when I see that parent being strong for them, I have no idea how they do it. But I see it all the time. And even with these celebrities—so I want to share a cool story. I'll mention it just because Chris Pratt's coming out—the movie is in two days: *Jurassic World 2* is coming out. But a couple years ago, after I saw that he

had saved his costume from *Guardians of the Galaxy*—was it *Guardians*? No, from *Jurassic World*, he wanted to go visit the kids at the hospital.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And we went to Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

Winn: You and Chris.

Kelli: Yeah. And—

Winn: You didn’t invite me.

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: It’s all right. Go ahead, go ahead.

Kelli: I’m so sorry!

Winn: It’s all right.

Kelli: I’m so sorry. And we had all the kids watch the movie and then he came out in his superhero outfit.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: And these kids were like, “Oh my gosh, the superhero on the screen is walking into our room.”

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: And it was so amazing. And then we went and did individual room visits for a couple hours after that.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: He only had an hour but he stayed longer. But the thing that I loved the most is when Chris walked in the hospital that day he said, “I need to get a hospital visit on my schedule every month.”

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And that’s just who he is because these kids change these celebrities. It’s not about what the celebrity can give to the kid; it’s what the kid really gives to the celebrity.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: It's unbelievable because they have a spark inside of them. They have an, "I can do this," no-quit type of attitude that is infectious. And literally when I think about my challenges on a daily basis, they become nothing because I watch a kid who's been in constant pain his entire life and will never get out of his wheelchair or not have a trach. And like if Jacob can do that, I can do that.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: I can show up for the little tiny things. And the thing is, you don't want to minimize your own challenges, 'cause I often do that a lot. I'm like, *Well, I'm not dying right now. I don't have cancer. I don't have cerebral palsy. I don't have cystic fibrosis.* But whatever your pain is to you, it's real to you. Don't minimize it.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: Don't minimize it. Don't compare and despair. Just don't do it.

Winn: Huh. So, obviously every charitable organization needs money.

Kelli: Hm.

Winn: But there's other gifts. There's other things that they need, too. You say that you bring these celebrities into the hospitals and it changes the celebrity—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —but also it's—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —inspiring or it's fun for the kids—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —and creates a spark for them, which is absolutely valuable. What else do these kids need?

Kelli: I think these kids need to know that they're seen and that they're heard and that people love them. And so, for me, I feel so blessed, Winn, because I have all of these celebrity relationships that I've been able to build the last 22 years and I use them to help make a child happy. *[laughs]* And it's not hard to make a difference. One of my little favorite guys, his name is Maverick, and three years ago on his birthday I reached out to Phineas from the movie, *Phineas and Ferb*, that TV show.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: And had Phineas call him on his birthday last year—

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: —for his birthday. His favorite Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, Raphael, called him for his birthday. So many of these kids look different, like Isaiah who doesn't have a jaw, and I know several kids without arms, without legs, and they just want you to see them, not their body. They want you to see them, see their hearts, see what's going on. Don't make it about what on the outside appears to be a physical disability because I know they would tell you that they don't see themselves as having a disability. I think they see themselves as just a little different.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And different can be beautiful.

Winn: Hm. So people listening to this, give a challenge out. 'Cause people listening to this, "Well, I'm not a celebrity so it really wouldn't make a—"

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: "—difference if I showed up at a Children's Miracle Network—"

Kelli: Right.

Winn: "—Hospital."

Kelli: Right.

Winn: But, so give—

Kelli: They can volunteer.

Winn: —a shout out.

Kelli: Yeah, people can volunteer. They can call up their local Children's Miracle Network Hospitals to see what different fundraising programs they have or events coming up that they can volunteer. But honestly, everywhere I go in society, I see some child that I can tell has been treated at a hospital or maybe going through treatment, and I love to show love.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: Like because lots of times, those kids are made fun of or excluded. How might you make that child feel love—

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: —in that moment? It could be as simple as a smile.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: It could be a, “Hi,” going up to the parents saying, “Hello,” starting a conversation. Like I love doing that because, you know, even though I don’t struggle with those same things, I feel different, right? And I love it when people smile at me and are willing to talk to me. And I typically gravitate towards the sickest miracle kid because I assume they’re going through the hardest thing. But I’m like—

Winn: Yeah.

Kelli: —I’m going to find the kid who looks like he’s in the most pain and looks like he’s having the hardest time. That’s going—who I’m going to go to.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And that’s who I’m going to show love to.

Winn: From your experience—and you have—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —a lot of experience—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —a lot of people would look and somebody that doesn’t have a jaw, somebody that doesn’t have—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —limbs—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —or somebody going through—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —they don’t have hair or whatever—

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: —people don’t know what to do and so they just—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —look the other way.

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: So, meaning—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —“I didn’t see that, I just looked the other way.”

Kelli: Right.

Winn: In your experience with these kids, would these kids prefer that we come up and ask them, “Hey, what’s going on?”

Kelli: No.

Winn: What do they prefer?

Kelli: No. A case in point would be one of our mutual friends, Josh Sundquist.

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: So I met Josh when he was 11 years old. He lost his leg to cancer at the hip—

Winn: Right.

Kelli: —from Ewing sarcoma. Doctors said that he had a 50 percent chance of survival but today Josh is 33 and now he’s a very famous motivational speaker, author, YouTuber, Paralympian, comedian.

Winn: He’s hilarious, too.

Kelli: Yeah. He’s amazing and he’s—

Winn: Yeah.

Kelli: —just changing the world with his story. But he has one leg and he uses crutches. He doesn’t want people to come up to him and say, “Hey, what happened to your leg?” which is what happens to him all the time. People will come up and say, “Hey, thanks for your service,” like he lost his leg in the war or military service.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: He’s just like, “No, just treat me as a human being.”

Winn: Right.

Kelli: Like, “You don’t need to acknowledge that I don’t have one—like we all know I don’t—I’m missing a leg. But see me.”

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: “Don’t see my missing leg.”

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: So I don’t think that—

Winn: But don’t turn away.

Kelli: Yeah, yeah.

Winn: Don’t pretend I didn’t—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —see you.

Kelli: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And so he gets stared at all the time and, you know, all that but it’s like that doesn’t have to be the reason to start a conversation with him. Yeah, maybe once you’ve come to know him and talk to him, you could be like, “Hey, I’m curious like, you know, would you mind sharing what happened to you?” But don’t make that what the conversation—

Winn: Like that’s what—

Kelli: —starts—

Winn: Got it.

Kelli: —about. And, you know, it can be tricky ’cause you want to know but.

Winn: So there is an opportunity—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —for people at their local hospital—

Kelli: Yes!

Winn: —to show up and volunteer in what capacity?

Kelli: Well, you—every hospital is different. So you would reach out—at every hospital there’s a Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals program director.

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: And you could call that person and you can reach out to me and I can provide contact information.

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: And I can connect them with that person and they could be like, “Oh yes, we would love for you to support our dance marathon program or our Extra Life program or we could use help with this 5k that’s coming up.” I mean, there is opportunity to get involved, there is. And also, it’s also very easy, just go to cmnhospitals.org. And even if you just donate one dollar, you’re helping save kids’ lives.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: ‘Cause that dollar turns into \$1 million turns into \$10 million. That’s how we’ve got to be a \$5 billion company is because it happened one dollar at a time and that’s what you know, too, because that’s what you do.

Winn: Yeah, right, right.

Kelli: I mean, that’s the philosophy you live and you have thousands of students who are, on a daily basis, making a difference in their community and then you bring it all together and you’ve raised over \$20 million.

Winn: Almost \$20 million, yeah.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: Is this—

Kelli: A dollar at a time.

Winn: I know.

Kelli: It’s crazy.

Winn: Everybody thinks this: *Well, they went and got a \$20 million—*

Kelli: No, no.

Winn: *—donation from—*

Kelli: No.

Winn: *—some rich guy. No—*

Kelli: But—

Winn: *—it was five bucks here. [laughs]*

Kelli: Yeah, yeah.

Winn: Is this true that you know those little cards that you—like you go to a 7-Eleven or a Walmart or—

Kelli: Uh-huh.

Winn: —whatever—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —and they say, “Hey, would you like to make a donation today?”

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: And you give a dollar or five dollars—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —and they write your name on the—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —the Children’s Miracle Network—

Kelli: Like the little Miracle Balloons that we—

Winn: —balloons—

Kelli: Yeah, yeah, uh-huh.

Winn: —that you have.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: That that campaign alone raises like \$60 million a year?

Kelli: Over that.

Winn: Is that—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: You’re kidding.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: Geez.

Kelli: And, Winn, the back story to this is so cool. You're going to love this. So this started—I don't know if it was like 25 years ago but there was this grandma who wanted to make a difference in her local community. And so she decided to draw a Miracle Balloon—

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: —and went to like Kinko's or whatever and just printed copies of it and sold it. That little idea has resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars—

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: —for our organization. This little grandma, who just drew a balloon and made copies of it.

Winn: Love that.

Kelli: I mean it's unbelievable.

Winn: What do parents need? 'Cause they're pretty much on lockdown at that hospital—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —24/7 and they're—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —probably coming to relieve each other while the other spouse goes—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —and takes a shower or goes and has a good cry or—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —goes to earn a paycheck.

Kelli: Yeah. I—honestly, the needs can be very simple because—I want to share a story of a mom that I know and some needs that she has from having to spend so much time at a children's hospital. Her name is Heather Matting and her son is Luke Matting. Luke was born at a children's hospital in Pennsylvania and his biological mother was a drug addict and an alcoholic and she abandoned him at the hospital. One day, Heather overheard another nurse say, "Who would ever want this child?"

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And in that moment, she knew no one would. And in her heart, she knew it was her responsibility to adopt Luke. So, fast forward, Luke has so many medical problems. When he's nine years old he gets a double lung transplant. Thankfully, to another—parents who were willing to lose, you know, sacrifice that for their child so Luke could live. And then Luke today is 16 years old. Most kids don't live five years out of a double lung transplant.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And Luke is defying the odds every day. But Luke's stomach doesn't work so he can't eat food. So he lives six hours from his nearest children's hospital and they have a friend named Captain Joe who will fly him six hours to get to the hospital whenever Luke needs that attention at the hospital. And Heather is typically there all of the time. She can go to the hospital six months at a time, eight months at a time. What she loves, sometimes people will just drop by the hospital and bring her food.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Can you imagine living on hospital food for six months?

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Eight months? A gift card, a text message, a phone call. Like I'm always checking in with her because I know what her life is like. She also has six other kids; two that she's adopted from Haiti: one's a burn victim, one has AIDS. Like she's just like—her life is about giving back and—

Winn: Geez.

Kelli: —serving others.

Winn: Geez! This woman!

Kelli: So it's like what can I do to—

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: —help Heather? So I'm constantly reaching out. And what—I like to do things for Luke. So I was with Chris Pine at a hospital. He wanted to go visit the kids and show his movie—oh, what was it—*Star Trek* that came out or something. So I had him do a video for Luke. Little things like that make Heather happy because when Luke's happy, Mom's happy, right?

Winn: Right.

Kelli: And—but it’s just the little things. It’s letting them know that you care. It’s sending a good thought, a prayer that, “Please let Luke have a good day today. Please let Heather know it’s going to be okay.”

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: You know? Good vibes go a long way. *[laughs]* Sending good—

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: —vibes into the universe.

Winn: In visiting your website—which is very well done, by the way.

Kelli: Thank you, thank you.

Winn: People can learn a lot about you—

Kelli: Thank you.

Winn: —about your story, as well as what you offer. You have a book coming out, which we will absolutely talk about. But some of these other topics that I found on your website where it says, “How to live a full life with anxiety and depression.”

Kelli: Right. Yeah, that’s something that I’ve learned to do over the years because, at the end of the day, happiness is a choice. I can get out of bed every day and choose what kind of day I’m going to have. If you look at it on a scale of one to ten, am I going to have a five? Am I going to have a ten? Who decides that? You do. No matter what’s going on in your life at that moment, you can choose to be happy. So that’s something that I work on every day. I have so many kids that show me that, “You know what? I’m in this wheelchair today. I don’t get to go swimming like my friends. I don’t get to do the things they do. But you know what? I am alive.”

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: “I’m alive right now and I get to show up.” And so I just know that every day I make that choice.

Winn: How often do you have to make that choice in the course of a day? Is it just you just have to make that choice once in the beginning—

Kelli: Hm-mm.

Winn: —of the day or do you have to like choose it over and over and over and over again?

Kelli: It’s all day.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: It's all day long, *How am I going to choose to show up today? Am I going to choose love or am I going to choose fear?* I'm going to choose love. And it's hard because a lot of times it can be really hard to talk to yourself nice. And I love your book, *Be Nice*, but you need to talk nice and obsess about—what if we obsessed about all of our positive qualities instead of the things that we think we're lacking?

Winn: Right.

Kelli: And it's really just turning the radio station to the "FM: I'm Awesome" station.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: And listening to that all day versus, you know, the—I always call my person that's not very nice to myself Vicious B. Like she's got a lot—

Winn: Vicious B.

Kelli: Vicious B.

Winn: That's your counterpart that's—

Kelli: Yeah, that's my counterpart. She's got a lot to say to me on a daily basis but—

Winn: Huh.

Kelli: —I'm just going to turn her off, turn on the positive station, and know that I have a choice to—

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: —be happy.

Winn: I like how you broke it down real, real simple: you can choose love or you can choose fear.

Kelli: Hm, yeah.

Winn: You know, fear has many faces. Fear shows up in—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —anxiety and—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —depression and judgement—

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: —against others—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —and self-attack and everything else. And the opposite of fear is love and love—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —is—

Kelli: And—

Winn: —happiness and all these other things—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —that we're talking about.

Kelli: I coined this acronym for love and it's Letting Out your Voice Effectively.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And so not only is it so important to choose love and show up with love for other people but you've got to start with yourself. You have to.

Winn: Mindfully living with body dysmorphic disorder. Mindfully.

Kelli: Yes, mindfully. Being present in my life. It's so easy for me to go through life so fast but I want to choose to be in the moment. I want to choose to live. Every week we have 168 hours. You can break that down to seconds. If you can choose to be in that moment, you can get through the moment. A lot of times with anxiety and depression you think that's going to overwhelm you but it's like a roller coaster: if you can just ride the wave of that emotion, it's going to come down. So be in that moment and know you're going to get to the other side of that moment.

Winn: If you could wish this away—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —if you could take a pill, “Oh my gosh—”

Kelli: Uh-huh.

Winn: “—Kelli, there’s a pill—”

Kelli: Oh my gosh, I love this question!

Winn: “—that this completely goes away today.”

Kelli: I love this question.

Winn: Would you take the pill?

Kelli: I wouldn’t and here’s why: the struggles that I’ve had have given me an empathy and compassion where every day of my life, when I get up I pray, “Who can I be a blessing in their life today?” And that’s because I know what the struggle feels like. And the reason that I have a great life is because my whole emphasis is in serving others. As Oprah said, “Our life is validated by our service to others.”

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And so I just feel like my whole life is about helping other people but I don’t think I’d want to help other people as much as I want to because of the suffering on the other side.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: Like I get up and love helping these kids because it makes me feel so happy.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Like it makes me feel so happy and it makes my struggles seem small. And it makes them so much easier to deal with because on the other side I’m focused on being a blessing in someone else’s life.

Winn: It sounds to me like you know that this is never going to go away. You know that—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —that dealing with this anxiety—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —body dysmorphic—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —disorder is something that you’re going to deal with every single day for the rest of your life.

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: Was there a time in your life where you thought, *I'm going to wake up one day and this is going to be gone?*

Kelli: Yeah. Honestly, I've prayed for that miracle before but I've had a lot of growth from this struggle and I am grateful. I mean, seriously Winn, like so I'm so excited about being on stage and I've had the opportunity to do motivational speaking. If I hadn't been through these struggles, I wouldn't have anything to talk about.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: And I'm so grateful that I am—

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: —so passionate about—I feel like I know what my calling is and I'm trying to honor that calling. 'Cause life is always speaking to you and telling you, "Are you paying attention?" And I'm trying to pay attention. Yeah, you've been through these challenging times. Yes, there are people that are going through these challenges, as well. How are you going to be vulnerable and share your story so you can help someone who may be going through something similar? And I've been really blessed and fortunate to have positive feedback where they've said, "Thank you so much for sharing that. I had no idea."

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: "I'm going through my own thing and this really helped me." And I'm like, okay, I know my calling 'cause, I mean, I grew up Mormon. You get married and you have four kids or eight kids. I am not married and I don't have any kids. And I always felt "less than" because of that. But I know now that I know what my purpose is.

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: I know why I'm here. And that's why I'm sharing this story is because—

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: —I want to help people who are struggling suffer less.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And we all have our own journey. We all have to go through our struggles—

Winn: Everybody has a story.

Kelli: I can't take someone's pain away but hopefully sharing some of the things that I've learned over the years, especially working with these kids and watching the miracles that I—

Winn: You and I were talking about Marianne Williamson before—

Kelli: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Winn: —we started recording. And she was—'cause it says in the Bible or someplace, "God loves a sinner," and she—well, why is that? And she's like, "Well, because they tend to be more interesting." *[laughs]*

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: You know—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —so we're all—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —a bit of a sinner.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: We're all a bit of—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: We have a story.

Kelli: Yeah, we do. We do. And that's the thing is like I'm telling you my story but every person on this planet has a story.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: There's not one person that couldn't be on your MASTERS class telling you about a story that's happened in their life that could help someone else.

Winn: Right. And that's what makes us interesting. That's what makes you valuable to stand on a stage and help people—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —one-on-one or with the masses. Okay, I like this one: living life in alignment with your values. What do you mean by that?

Kelli: Whew. Well, I think it's so important that, first of all, we know what our values are *[laughs]* and be defined by our own values and not by a cultural or a society value. Deciding for yourself what is true to you.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: For me, I want to be a person of integrity and to me that means deciding what I believe and then living my life in alignment with what those beliefs are. And if you're out of alignment, it never feels good.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Ever. Because you're not being authentic, you're not being real, you're not being true. And so, for me, I want to be true to what my values are.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: You can always course-correct and decide, *Oh, maybe that wasn't my value and I was living someone else's value*. But we're a lot happier when we are living our life intentionally, knowing that we want to be true to what we really believe.

Winn: Got it. You say trusting God's plan for—

Kelli: Yes.

Winn: —your life.

Kelli: Yes.

Winn: What do you mean by that?

Kelli: So I really think that a lot of times we can get tripped up with what we want for our lives and I think a lot of times we don't dream as big as God dreams for us. And so in my instance, I always had a dream of getting married in my 20s and having four children. That's just what I was going to do. I was so excited to have that dream. I just turned 45 last week and I am so grateful that God didn't answer those prayers—

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: —for me to get married and have kids because instead of four kids, I have 100 kids.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: He dreamed way bigger for me than I dreamed for myself. You have to know that God's plan is perfect. It is. It always is.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And I know that's hard to look at it that way but I like to look at everything that happens into my—in my life as perfect. How is this situation perfect for me in this moment?

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And if you look at life like that instead of being a victim and, "Why is this happening to me?" No, life is always happening for you.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: As Louise Hay says—

Winn: I love that.

Kelli: —"Life is your friend."

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Life is my friend. Life loves me. Life has my back.

Winn: Beautiful. Treat every day as a gift.

Kelli: This one is big to me because I have so many kids that I know of right now *[pauses and voice breaks]* that don't have, that won't have full lives. One of my favorite kids probably won't live until past 12 and he's 10 right now. And I know a little girl with progeria and she's eight years old and she probably won't live long as well. And so when you know—your days are numbered, right? Like our days are numbered. And we would never—if someone came to us and said, "Hey, can I have 5 of your days, 10 of your days, 20 of your days?" We would never give our days away. We just don't know how many we have so we can't not take advantage of every hour of every day. We have to treat it as a gift. And I just say that because I know so many kids who aren't going to be on this earth long but they are making a huge impact—

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: —with the time that they have on this earth.

Winn: How do you not fall apart every day at work in these hospitals? *[laughs]*

Kelli: Right.

Winn: 'Cause I had—I know what I'm good at.

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: I'm really good at raising money.

Kelli: Right, right, right.

Winn: 'Cause I have no problem—

Kelli: Right, right, right.

Winn: —asking anybody—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —for money. I'm—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —fine with that.

Kelli: Right.

Winn: But then I know people who can't raise a dime—

Kelli: *[laughs]* Right.

Winn: —but they can show up—

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: —and get their hands dirty—

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: —and volunteer. But I'm the type, like I fall apart when I—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —when I'm in—my visit—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —to the hospital was I was a mess.

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: I wasn't there to—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: I didn't feel like I was bringing joy to these kids. I was a mess the—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —whole time but—

Kelli: Yeah. Well, unfortunately I've lost a lot of kids over the years and I just—one of my kids who I'd mentioned earlier, Jacob, he would have been 21 just a couple days ago and we were celebrating what would have been his birthday. And Jacob had spina bifida and he was in a wheelchair his entire life and he always had a trach and he was always in constant pain. And I'm so excited to show you a picture of him. You're just going to love him. But Jacob, when he was wheeled into a room, his eyes like lit up the entire room and you felt his spirit. And he recently, before he passed away, he was hired as a Chik-fil-A greeter. He doesn't really talk but like he could just smile, right?

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: All he did is smile. And I'm like, "I'm so jealous of all those customers that get to go into Chik-fil-A and see Jacob's face." And unfortunately there's stories where these kids, they're not here as long as their parents want them to be here. But their parents know that every day is the biggest gift; every hour with that child, every day with that child, every week with that child.

Winn: Mm-hm.

Kelli: And so one of my best friends, her name is Amber, and her son has mitochondrial disease and it's a horrible disease and she knows time is very limited. And so there are no missed days. There are no off days. There are—every day is live life to the fullest.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Always.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Always. Yeah.

Winn: You say how to radically practice self-love. *Radically.*

Kelli: *[laughs]* Yeah. I want to share a story around this because I've learned so much from these kids. These kids teach me how to love myself. My friend Kyle Stepp is 24 years old today and I met him probably about eight years ago. When Kyle was little, the first time a Children's Miracle Network Hospital saved his life was when his dad was drunk and drove him off of a cliff.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: When he's seven years old, nobody picks him up from school one day and child services come to get him. They go to his mom's house. She says, "I don't want him. He's a burden to me." So for seven years Kyle bounces back from foster care. And it's pretty horrible and doesn't feel like he has much love in his life. And finally when he's 14 he gets to go to New Mexico and live with his grandparents. And about a month after he gets there, he gets diagnosed with stage 4 cancer.

Winn: Geez.

Kelli: And for three and a half years he has 98 rounds of chemo, he has 13 surgeries, and he fights cancer and he wins. And just two years ago he graduated as valedictorian of his college. And I'm like, "Kyle, how is it that you choose to have self-love because you weren't demonstrated? Your parents didn't want you. You go from foster home to foster home." And he said, "Kelli, I choose to love intentionally. I choose to love on purpose. I stop to smell the roses. I treat every day as a gift." He loves himself and that's radical self-love to me.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: It's radical self-love. And so it's something that he's taught me and it's something that I just choose to—every day you have got to—as Louise says, "Go to the mirror: 'Honey, I love you. You're beautiful. I really, really love you.'" It's really getting out of bed every day and being so grateful that you're alive and running to the mirror and saying, "I love you. I really do."

Winn: I guess that is radical for a lot—

Kelli: It is!

Winn: —of people to hear it that way.

Kelli: Oh my gosh. It—

Winn: It's radical. How dare you say—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —that I should fall in love with myself.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: Like who do you think you are—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —to tell me—and that's a radical, radical concept for some people.

Kelli: Yeah. Yeah, and I do, I watch these kids who look so different but they *[whispers]* love themselves. And they have all these challenges but they love themselves. And so, it's just they're such a blessing in my life.

Winn: Are you working outside of your job description here?

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: Because your job description—

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: —is in working with the celebrities—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —but obviously you have a relationship with a lot of these kids and their—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —parents—

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: —and everything.

Kelli: Right.

Winn: Was that in your job description or was that just part of—

Kelli: It's out of my job description, it's my purpose.

Winn: Okay, *oh*.

Kelli: It's my why. It's my why. These kids are my why. They're why I get out of bed every day. They are my everything.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Everything. And I do have an amazing story I'd like to share with you—

Winn: Oh, please.

Kelli: —if you're okay.

Winn: Absolutely.

Kelli: Okay. So a couple years ago—actually this was about four years ago—I was in Washington, D.C. And every year we take one kid from each state who's

been treated at a Children's Miracle Network Hospital and we fly them to Washington, D.C., to meet the president and then we go to Disney World. And it's amazing and I actually, when I started in 1996, that was our—

Winn: I was at the event once.

Kelli: Oh, were you? Yeah!

Winn: In—

Kelli: Yeah, you were!

Winn: In—

Kelli: Yeah, you've met these kids.

Winn: It was incredible.

Kelli: You came to Orlando. You actually got to meet Jacob, the kid that I was telling you about.

Winn: Oh my gosh.

Kelli: He was there the year that you were there.

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: Yeah, so anyway, that program started in 1996. So that's how I met Josh Sundquist—

Winn: Right.

Kelli: —is 1996, he was our champion from Virginia.

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: So four years ago, I'm in D.C. and this little kid—he's four years old at the time—and he walks up to the desk and I find out that he's from Wyoming. I'm from Wyoming. He was born June 11th, I was born June 11th. He loves the Boston Red Sox, I love the Boston Red Sox.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: He's the one I did all those things for, for his birthday.

Winn: And he's four.

Kelli: Yeah, that was—

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: —when he was four years old. So when he was six years old, he got down on one knee with a diamond ring and three of my favorite things: a Kit Kat, a Diet Coke, and a lemon in a red cooler behind him. And he said, “Kelli, will you marry me when I’m fully grown up?”

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: And of course I said yes because who could turn down that offer?

Winn: Right.

Kelli: So two years ago April, Maverick was having a really bad day. He’s had over 40 surgeries, including five open-heart surgeries.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: When Maverick was five years old, he passed away at his children’s hospital—

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: —but doctors brought him back and he remembers God doing chest compressions on him. This kid has made a huge impact in my life. So when I heard he wasn’t doing well, I reached out to my friend, Kevin Millar, who played first baseman for the Boston Red Sox when they won the World Series in 2004. And I said, “Kev, Mav’s not doing very well today. Can you see if you can get a video from his hero, Big Papi?” And within two hours of sending that text I had a video that said—it was from Big Papi and it said, “Maverick, we love you. Stay positive. Keep the faith and I’m going to hit a homerun for you tonight. Remember that.” So fast forward a couple hours; it’s a beautiful night at Fenway Park and the Boston Red Sox are playing their rival, the New York Yankees. And Big Papi steps up to bat the first time and he strikes out. He steps up to bat the second time and he strikes out. He steps up to bat the third time and he strikes out. He steps up to bat the fourth time. It’s the bottom of the eighth inning, the game is tied 2-2 and he’s up against one of the best relieving pitchers in the game, someone he’s never had a hit off of in his entire career. He was 0 for 7 against this pitcher. And he swings the bat and he hits a homerun for Maverick. And I’m in my bedroom and I was on my knees and I’m like, “Thank you, God. Thank you, God. Thank you, God,” because Maverick’s hero hit a homerun for him. The next thing I know, I have a video from Maverick. And it says, “Big Papi, you never let me down and I’m going to try my hardest to get to Fenway Park to meet you.” And within two weeks, thanks to Kevin Millar, I was on a private plane from Cheyenne, Wyoming, with my little man Maverick, for him to meet his hero and for him to throw out the first pitch. And the crazy thing is, I’d been trying to get a video from Big Papi for Maverick for a long time. But on Instagram that day, I saw

Kevin's kids with Big Papi. If I wouldn't have seen that, I—like you have to take action, Winn.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: When you get an idea to do something for someone else, listen to that voice and take action on that voice because someone needs you that day. God typically helps people through other people, right? You're other people's answer to prayers.

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: And you have to be willing to show up for them.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And so that's one of the coolest miracles that I've ever experienced in my life. And so Mavs is my little fiancé—

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: —and I love this kid more than life. I actually have another little fiancé, his name is AJ. And AJ has seven inoperable brain tumors and he's seven years old. And he just found out that he had to start chemo again. So he started chemo last week because his tumors are growing in his brain and it stinks. It really stinks. But you know what? AJ's not sad about it. AJ is confident that everything's going to be okay.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: He asks people for prayers and he knows it's going to be okay.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: So I know it's going to be okay, too.

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: *[sighs]* I'd be a blubbering idiot—

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: —every day just listening to these. Wow. You talked about finding your purpose and—

Kelli: Yes, yes.

Winn: It's something that we're—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —really focused on—

Kelli: Yes.

Winn: —not in my personal life only but also companywide and we talk about this a lot.

Kelli: Yes, yes.

Winn: And we tell people, “Your purpose can never be money.”

Kelli: Hm, my gosh.

Winn: It can never be your purpose. Your purpose has to be—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: For me, it's my daughter.

Kelli: Yes, yes.

Winn: You know, it's being a good dad.

Kelli: Yes, yes.

Winn: And that will drive me to eat better—

Kelli: Mm-hm.

Winn: —to get more sleep, to work out more, to be a nicer human being, to get rid of road rage. It will—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: It will show up in many, many areas. Why? Because I have a little girl and that's my—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —purpose, that's my why.

Kelli: Right. Well, we both know—'cause we both know—you are a celebrity and we both know a lot of celebrities, okay? Money does not make you happy.

Winn: Right.

Kelli: Ever. I mean, it's nice to have money and money is not a bad thing but you have to know what's getting you out of bed on a daily basis because there has to be something bigger than you, right?

Winn: Right.

Kelli: If there isn't then you're going to be miserable. If you don't look outside of yourself and continually look for opportunities to serve others, life doesn't have a lot of deep joy. And that's what it's about.

Winn: How often do you have to remind yourself of your purpose and your why and—or cultivate it—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —invest more into that?

Kelli: Right. Well, it's pretty easy for me 'cause every day I get to show up—Winn, this is so cool. So, I get to the national office of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, I—

Winn: Which are nice offices—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —now, by the way. I've been there, so.

Kelli: You get in the elevator and there's all of my kids. They're every wall of the elevator. I have about 30 kids' faces so when I go up to the fourth floor every day, my why is staring at me.

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: And then all—

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: —throughout the building we have huge murals of these kids so my why, it's just so apparent. My job is to help save kids' lives.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: And to choose love and show love.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: It's that easy. You know, a lot of times I get caught up in the numbers of everything like, "How much did you raise?" or all of that. But my friend the other day she said, "Why are you so focused on the numbers?" And we were

talking about my body weight at the time and she's like, "What if your life was measured on a daily basis: Did you feel today? Did you love today? Were you present today? Did you live?" What if every day our success was measured by those four questions?

Winn: Say them again.

Kelli: Did you feel today?

Winn: Okay.

Kelli: Did you love today? Were you present today? Did you fully live today?

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: It's pretty simple, Winn. Like—

Winn: Huh.

Kelli: —we make it so hard. I know, I make it so hard because it's not that challenging. And yesterday was like—I just went out—I'm here in LA, I have some friends, and I just made a little bit of an effort to go out of my way to do something special for a couple of them. That's what it's about. It's not about, "Oh, I'm going to have this meeting with this celebrity." It's like, "No. I'm in town and this person could use this so I'm going to drive in traffic for an hour because it's about loving today."

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: I'm going to love today. I'm going to show up today for someone else and get outside of my own struggles and crazy thoughts in my head 'cause miracles happen when we get outside of ourselves and show up for other people.

Winn: You have a book—

Kelli: Yes.

Winn: —coming out, called *Untold Miracles*.

Kelli: Yes. *[laughs]*

Winn: So I'm guessing that it's these—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —stories that you're sharing with us.

Kelli: Yeah. So I actually have a podcast called *Untold Miracles* where every week we interview a celebrity and we talk about miracles.

Winn: Okay, so how can people find your podcast?

Kelli: Oh, okay. So it's on Spotify, iTunes, or you can go to untoldmiracles.org.

Winn: Untoldmiracles.org.

Kelli: Yes and they definitely need to go listen to your episode. My episode this week—

Winn: Thank you for that.

Kelli: —is with Kristen Bell. That was a really fun one but I love talking about miracles, Winn. I mean, miracles, they're so great and we can manifest whatever we want on a daily basis. So miracles are—they're real. But yeah, so untoldmiracles.org or Spotify, iTunes, Google Play, pretty much you can listen to it there. So the book, *Untold Miracles*, chapter one is Maverick Schutte's story. It's pretty incredible.

Winn: Your fiancé.

Kelli: Yeah, my fiancé. But I share 15 miracles that I've witnessed over the years.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: Angelica Hale is one of—

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: —those chapters. Joshua Sundquist is one of those chapters. They're pretty unbelievable stories.

Winn: Wow. Congratulations.

Kelli: Yeah, thank you.

Winn: So when does it come out?

Kelli: Well, my goal is to get it done by the end of this year. It was going to be this fall.

Winn: We're in 2018 right now—

Kelli: I know.

Winn: —as you're—

Kelli: I know. Okay, so—

Winn: —people listening—

Kelli: Yeah, hopefully—

Winn: —to this 'cause people are going to listen to this—

Kelli: Hopefully by the end—

Winn: —in 10 years from now—

Kelli: Yeah. *[laughs]*

Winn: —and they're like, "Is her book out yet?"

Kelli: *[laughs]* Yeah, so the goal is for it to be out by the end of 2018, yeah.

Winn: Congratulations.

Kelli: Thank you. It's been challenging because I want to speak and I want to keep doing the podcast and, as you know, it's hard to find balance. And in my podcast with Kristen Bell this week she said, "I strike the word *balance* out of the dictionary. That really, I don't feel is possible. What I strive to do on a daily basis—" 'cause I asked her about balancing her career with motherhood— she's like, "I choose to be present every day—"

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: "—with my kids. I am present and that's how I find balance. I'm always present—"

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: "—with them."

Winn: Wow. That's great advice.

Kelli: It's pretty cool. Yeah. It's really good advice 'cause it's hard to do especially if you've got 20 things on your to-do list that day.

Winn: And if you're trying to shoot for balance, you're—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —measuring.

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: You're measuring—

Kelli: She's like, "Get rid of it."

Winn: —your weight. You're measuring—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —your money.

Kelli: Yep.

Winn: You're measuring—

Kelli: Get rid of it.

Winn: —how much time you're at the gym.

Kelli: Yes.

Winn: You're measuring—

Kelli: Yes.

Winn: Wow.

Kelli: Quit making it be about numbers.

Winn: Just be present.

Kelli: Yes.

Winn: "And with my kids, I'm going to be present."

Kelli: Yes. And honestly, I think, I know just from our conversations, I know that's how you show up as a father.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: I know it.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: I know it. 'Cause I know she's your number one. Everything will always be behind her.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: As it should be. And I love that.

Winn: Thank you.

Kelli: I love that that's how you've prioritized your life.

Winn: That's absolutely my intent.

Kelli: Yep. And it's what you're doing.

Winn: Thank you.

Kelli: And it's hard and especially in the position that you're in. For you to choose that—and I just have to say it's amazing this little human being that you've helped raise because at such a young age, for her to understand what it means to give back. The day that she gave all of those hugs to the fundraising events that she did just for this year. Like think about what she's going to be when she's 10! Like if she's already impacting the world at this age, can you imagine what she's going to be like at like—I'm just so excited to see how she grows up—

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: —and continues to change the world. It's amazing—

Winn: She's funny.

Kelli: —what you guys are doing.

Winn: We don't tell her to do that. We—

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: —don't say, "Go hug that person—"

Kelli: Right, right, right.

Winn: —because I don't think that that's appropriate.

Kelli: Right, right.

Winn: 'Cause kids have their own little radar—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —their own little boundaries—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —and I'm not going to force her—

Kelli: Right.

Winn: —to hug somebody that she's—but that's all on her.

Kelli: Yep.

Winn: For her latest thing is she wakes up, “Daddy, let’s go pick up trash.” I’m like, “Okay—”

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: “—can we have breakfast first?”

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: “Daddy, let’s go pick up trash.” *[laughs]*

Kelli: *[laughs]* Oh my gosh, I love that so—

Winn: Yeah.

Kelli: —much. I love that.

Winn: Kelli, do you have a final message for our listeners?

Kelli: I do. I want all the listeners to know that God loves them. I want them to dream big because anything in this life is possible. No matter what you want, you can achieve it and our success is defined by how we strive to make an impact in the lives of other human beings.

Winn: Hm. I can add nothing to that.

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: Thank you so much. If I wore mascara—

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: —I would need to go reapply right now. *[laughs]* You’re amazing.

Kelli: Ahh.

Winn: Keep doing—

Kelli: Thank you.

Winn: —what you’re doing and I’m just—my purpose and my why of getting behind Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals has just been heightened today—

Kelli: Yeah.

Winn: —to a whole other level. So—

Kelli: Well, and I hope you—

Winn: —thank you for that.

Kelli: I hope you know, like \$1.3 million, that's creating a lot of miracles. That's providing a lot of families with hope.

Winn: Cool.

Kelli: And so we are incredibly grateful. I am incredibly grateful 'cause you're helping my boyfriends and my fiancés—

Winn: *[laughs]*

Kelli: —and all of these families that I know. Like I think I might have mentioned to you before, you might now know of the individual miracle that you created but it's a ripple effect.

Winn: Hm.

Kelli: It just continues and continues and so thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, *thank you* for all you do and for your big heart. I'm just trying to be like you, Winn, and that's the honest truth.

Winn: Thanks, sweetheart.

Kelli: *[laughs]*

Winn: Love you.

Kelli: I love you more. *[laughs]*