

EPISODE 177

[INTRODUCTION]

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I got pulled over for not paying a ticket because I had some ticket that happened a year earlier and I just didn't pay attention to it, because I was a teenager, teenagers don't really care about that kind of thing. I also didn't have an address for them to get it, so I don't even know where this ticket went. I never paid it. Long story short, they threw me up against the cop car right in front of the office and arrested me, and took me to jail in Detroit.

I had to stay the whole day there and the whole night there and I was completely freaking out because it was – my entire dream, my entire life was to get this job. Then I was like, I totally screwed my entire life up just by not paying this ticket.”

[0:01:20] LW: Hey friend, welcome back to the Light Watkins Show. I'm Light Watkins, and I interview ordinary folks, just like you and me, who've taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified as their mission in life. In doing so, they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who've either heard about their story, or who have witnessed them in action, or people who've directly benefited from their work.

Today, I am in a fascinating conversation with Bridget Hilton and Joe Huff. Bridget and Joe are the authors of an inspiring book called *Experiential Billionaire*, keyword being experiential. They're not actual billionaires. Here's the thing, Bridget and Joe are obsessed with experiences. In an effort to unlock the secrets of the power of experiences to transform lives, they've

dedicated a lot of years interviewing social science experts and conducting the largest study on life experiences ever done. They've turned themselves into experiential guinea pigs.

Together, Bridget and Joe have trained to be samurai. They've danced with the Northern Lights. They've tracked silverback gorillas. They've stood face to face with hungry lions. They've absorbed lessons from Maasai Mara tribesmen. They've sped across glaciers on dog sleds, built schools for kids in need. They studied with monks. They developed this hearing aid that they were able to then give 50,000 people hearing. They swam with sharks. They work with A-list celebrities. They've seen the seven wonders of the world. They've given away millions of dollars for social good. They've spoken on stage with people like, Sir Richard Branson. They've starred in commercials seen by tens of millions, and they've explored many other experiential riches that life has to offer.

I know when you hear that list of experiences, you're probably thinking to yourself, "Of course, they did all that. They're probably these privileged, rich kids who had trust funds, and they didn't have to work real jobs. That's why they had all that free time to travel the world and have those cool experiences." I'll be honest, that's what I originally thought. But the reality is that they actually didn't come from money at all.

Bridget is from Flint, Michigan. Joe is from Southern California. Both of them grew up in blue-collar families. They very much stumbled their way into this power of experiences. That's what makes this conversation so interesting. To see how it all came together with both Bridget and Joe trying to do the nine-to-five conventional thing and then creating a chance to help people. That's actually how they met. They met through philanthropy back when they had no money at all.

All in all, it's a great story and it culminates into this incredible book that they wrote called *Experiential Billionaire*. It just shows us how to die with no regrets. I think you're really going to be inspired by just hearing how the whole thing evolved. Without further ado, I want to introduce you to Bridget Hilton and Joe Huff.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:04:44] LW: Bridget and Joe, thank you so much for coming on to the podcast. I actually wasn't sure, Joe, if you were going to be on the podcast, because we've only been talking to Bridget. I'm super excited that you were able to come on because as I was reading the book, you guys have this really interesting format that I was, honestly, I was a bit skeptical when I first saw, okay, we're going to alternate chapters. I was like, "Huh. I wonder how that's going to go."

[0:05:13] BH: That was a really hard part about writing it, honestly.

[0:05:16] LW: Yeah. But it worked. I felt like it really worked. It's like turning between two channels but talking about the same story. Yeah, it was cool to see that connective tissue in my mind as I was going through the book. I'm excited to break that down because while I'm interested in the story and the concept, I also want to hear about the process. I think the process is really cool, about how you guys chose to present this information in this way.

We're talking about *Experiential Billionaire*, which is the book that you all just came out with. It's something that you've been speaking about, which is how we connected in the speaker community. I always like to start these conversations off just taking it back, so that the audience can get familiar with how you became the person that you are today. Let's talk about that. Let's talk about childhood. You say in the book that neither one of you came from money. Tell us where exactly you came from and what was happening in your house as you were growing up. What were your ideas of success like? We'll start with you, Bridget.

[0:06:20] BH: Sure. I actually think Joe actually probably has the better intro for this question, but then how we came together if you want to start with that.

[0:06:28] LW: We're not going to get to how you came together first. I just want to establish who you were as a young person.

[0:06:35] BH: I grew up in Flint, Michigan, which I'm sure you've heard of from not very positive things, like the water crisis, or the Michael Moore movies and stuff like that. I love my family, but everyone that I knew worked for General Motors or Ford. Basically, I didn't know anyone that was an entrepreneur, or an artist, or anyone that had really followed their passions outside of the auto industry. I was pretty alone in that.

The thing that I gravitated towards and that I really loved from a very young age was music. It really gave me the motivation to want to get out of Flint and to get into a better world. At the time, there was all these shows on TV, like Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, for example. I was watching that show and just dreaming and fantasizing about how I wanted to move to California. This is when I was a little kid.

When I was old enough to get these crappy jobs, I would pass out flyers outside of music venues and I would pick up trash at places, like Warp Tour, for example, for \$5 an hour. Then I had some jobs like, I was an intern at a radio station. I would pick up coffee for people there. I started doing all of these jobs, just in the hope that I would someday get to this fantasy of moving out of Michigan and coming to California and working in the music industry.

After five years of those types of jobs, I finally got an internship at Universal Music Group's office in Detroit, which no longer exists, but at the time that existed. I was 19 and that was one of the best things that had ever happened to me. I was an intern first, and then it was very, basically, just mailing stuff and then passing out flyers and stuff like that. Then it's funny, I've never told the story before, but what I did to get the coveted mailroom job, there were never any job openings there, because it was a really small office. There was a lot of people in Michigan that wanted to work in an industry like this, but there weren't any jobs. It was very rare that there was an opening, and it was a very lower-level opening.

What I did to impress the people at the office was to make a 30, 60, 90-day plan of how I would run the mailroom. I've never told anyone this before. This is funny. But I guess, it must have impressed them enough, out of a 100 people that applied for this job, I got that job. I ended up making 20 grand a year, which was a million dollars to me at the time because I was literally living in my car at the time. Then I was living on different couches around Michigan, around friends that I had. I didn't even have a place to live, so \$20,000 was literally winning the lottery to me.

That was the moment, I can still remember thinking I'm never going to have to really struggle again. Of course, I knew that I was going to have struggle with my life, but not to the point of hopefully, that I would have to live out of a car. That was one of the best days of my life, even though it was this mailroom job for \$20,000 a year.

[0:10:05] LW: Talk about the worst day of your experience working at the office.

[0:10:10] BH: I know where you're getting at. Less than two weeks into getting the mailroom job, I was pulling up to the office on a day that everyone in the office was actually having a meeting about the new releases. As I pull into the parking lot, I hear the sound that nobody wants to hear, especially when they're poor. Like, the "Woop, woop," the sound of a cop car pulling me over right outside of the office. The office had these giant, huge windows, so everybody could see what was happening outside. I got pulled over for not paying a ticket because I had some ticket that happened a year earlier and I just didn't pay attention to it. Because I was a teenager, teenagers don't really care about that thing.

I also didn't have an address for them to get it, so I don't even know where this ticket went. I never paid it. Long story short, they threw me up against the cop car, right in front of the office and arrested me, and took me to jail in Detroit. I had to stay the whole day there and the whole night there. I was completely freaking out because it was my entire dream, my entire life was to get this job. Then I was like, I totally screwed my entire life up just by not paying this ticket.

I sat in jail. Then the next morning, I was like, the only person that I can ask for money is Universal, which is where I was working. I basically asked them to take money out of my first paycheck to pay the bail. It was a horrible experience.

[0:11:50] JH: That wasn't part of the 30, or 60, or 90-day plan, right?

[0:11:55] BH: Yeah, that wasn't in my plans, but sometimes the best plans, you just don't know what's going to happen. That was a rough start to that job. At the end of that, I actually was able to, after our office shut down in Detroit, I was able to move to California. That's what really kickstarted a lot of my dreams. Ended up being okay.

[0:12:18] LW: You keep phrasing it like, "I got this job." But you're taking these leaps of faith, which I was really impressed with because you also mentioned in the book, that no one believed in you. You were living in your car. I don't know what your friend circle was like at the time, or what your relationship with your family was like at the time, but it takes a lot for someone to really bet on themselves in that way. I don't know if you had any — did you have any examples of that? I know you said you read a lot of biographies of other people. Is that your role models?

[0:12:50] BH: I've been asked a lot like, who was my main role model as a child. I love my family, but I don't look at any particular person as like that was the one person, or a teacher, or anything like that. I really feel like the willingness and wanting to learn about people that were successful was a huge help in my life. We're living in such an amazing time, especially now, where you can go online and learn from literally the best experts on anything in the world. That's so cool.

I mean, take meditation, for example. They can watch your podcast. That wasn't available when we were kids, right? What I would do is instead of going to class when I was in high school, or whatever, I would go to the library and just read biographies of people that were in the music industry, or bands, like the Beatles, or whoever. I knew everything. I knew every single fact about every band. I didn't know a lot about maybe math, or whatever, but I knew everything about music. That's what ended up getting me, eventually, to this job is because they were really impressed by my knowledge of music. I wasn't just trying to be an entertainment, to be one of those scene people. I really loved it. Truly, truly deeply loved it.

[0:14:09] LW: Was there one or two biographies that still stand out today as really fundamental in shaping your early path?

[0:14:17] BH: I was really into two different genres, which are completely opposite, but similar in some ways. I was really into classic rock and I was really into hip hop. As a kid, my dream was actually to work for Def Jam. I was reading the biographies of the people who had started Def Jam, and that was my dream.

[0:14:38] LW: Russell Simmons and Rick Rubin.

[0:14:40] BH: Exactly. When I eventually got to Universal, who owns Def Jam, I was like, I'm going to work there. They were like, "Actually, you're not, because you have to be 21 to work at Def Jam." I remember being so bummed about that. I was working for Inner Scope instead at the time, which was just as cool as Def Jam, and it has all of these amazing bands. It ended up being really great.

It's funny looking back as a kid that I was so obsessed with hip hop and Def Jam. Because obviously at the time, there wasn't the Led Zeppelins of the world, which was my other favorite genre.

[0:15:20] LW: You also lied when you applied for Universal and said that you were going to college, even though you had no intentions of going to college.

[0:15:27] BH: Yeah. Microsoft Paint was my friend, and I made a fake letter from the local university. I think it was called Oakland University, and said that I was going to school there, because they only allowed people to work for free, obviously, if you're getting college credit. I don't think it's legal to just work for free for no credit anymore. I made up a fake letter and said that I was going there. It's so funny. I never told anyone that I worked there until this book came out. I've been speaking to people that I worked with 20 years ago. I was like, "Oh, by the way, I made that up."

[0:16:06] JH: Yeah. She lied to get a job that pays no money.

[0:16:10] BH: Yeah.

[0:16:11] LW: But it became a pivotal part of the story, which I love. Okay, so then you moved to the –

[0:16:14] BH: I mean, that's how obsessed I was though. I was like, I will sleep in my car and get paid nothing and make up this stuff and do all this work, just so I can get out of this. It really took that.

[0:16:27] LW: All right. You moved to Los Angeles, we're going to get back to that. I want to hop over to Joe now and just talk about his earlier years leading up to the moment where you guys cross paths.

[0:16:39] JH: My childhood was perfect. It was just all, everything went exactly according to plan. That's it. It's funny. Listen, whenever we tell these stories, and Bridget and I, even though we've been working together for over a decade now and on the phone and in person, dozen hours a day usually, we still share stories that neither of us have heard all the time and we're

always having these conversations and these emotions come out when I think about those moments. We were just actually having this conversation last night about when I grew up, I remember when I started to realize how in my neighborhood, specifically even, that I definitely like, my family was the least financially stable of all the people that I knew.

I had a bike, like my other friends had a bike, but they all had nice bikes and I had the absolute cheapest Kmart bike, or the clothes that I wore were just like, everything was like, it started to become noticeable. I still think about that stuff to this day, how long-term some of those effects are. Growing up, I grew up initially in Chicago and then we moved to Southern California when I was pretty young. My parents, they worked really hard. Like a lot of folks, and they worked really, really hard to provide for us.

At that time, that meant that there were a lot of unsupervised moments. I had two older brothers as well, which they were three and four years older than me. Back in those days, people left their kids home and we were “latchkey kids” which I think nowadays, you'd get arrested and thrown in prison for decades if anyone heard you leaving your nine-year-old, whatever, home alone with their older sibling that's 12. Yeah, that's what we did.

We learned a lot, obviously, like trial-by-fire stuff. I got into a lot of trouble when I was young. School had been pretty easy for me, but I got in a lot of trouble, and there was a lack of role models, like what you just brought up with Bridget, or I guess, a lack of aspirational things in general outside of TV. I definitely was a kid that when I watched TV, I thought, “Yeah, I want to be rich like that. I want to have mansions and Ferraris.” I thought that was the cure-all for whatever else ails you in life.

I got into a lot of trouble in my high school years, where the friends I had were people that we bonded closely, but it was somewhere short of if not an actual gang situation, where the mentality was the bonds were around nothing positive. We basically, together, got into a lot of trouble. There was a clear direction where all of my friends in this group were going and it wasn't college, or anything potentially helpful in life, I would say.

That became such an issue that I wound up actually missing. By the time I got to my sophomore year in high school, I missed 27 days of school one semester without my parents even realizing,

because again, they would go to work in the morning and assume I was going to go to school. Then I just wouldn't. I forged signatures on excuses, and so on.

I wound up getting kicked out of school. I remember that day, that was a really, really vivid day. Actually, when I showed up to school, my junior year, and I haven't told this story in this detail, really. I tell it in the book, but it's something that's like, to paint the picture, school started and I just didn't go. My mom asked me when school started and I was like, "Oh, it's in a couple of weeks." She just literally didn't know, because she was working full-time. My dad was working full-time. They were just gone.

Finally, a couple of weeks into the school year, I went to the school and just walked in very nonchalantly and went to see my guidance counselor and said, "Here to register and get my classes." She sat me down and was like, "You missed so many days last year. You failed all of your classes and you can't graduate. You're not going to graduate, even if you went to school every day this year and next year. It's not possible. A, you can't just show up and go to school two weeks late. B, we're going to expel you."

I was just like, "Wait. No, no." I had a bunch of excuses, like we all do. None of those matter, as they usually don't. I got sent home to tell my parents that I was going to get kicked out of school. It was a really pivotal moment in my life because that was really when I started to take a more serious look at where my life was headed, and what was going to happen. There's a quote that we also say in the book that I think is super powerful, but show me your friends and I'll show you your future. I started really looking at that.

My friends, too, were older, so I started to see what was going to happen in my life most likely because they were already dropping out of school and things were happening and people were – just a lot of drug addiction and violence and then even death started happening. I somehow managed to turn this around. I went to a continuation school, which a lot of people I don't think even know what that is, but it's basically for a lot of people, it's a stepping stone to either A, in the good case, getting your GED, or B, getting kicked out of school, or dropping out of school.

Very, very infrequently, people go and actually make up enough credits and go back to their regular high school. But I actually decided that that was a potential path forward, and I decided to try to do that and I did it. That was really powerful as a proof point that we're in control of our

lives. Because up until then, I had so many excuses as to A, why things didn't matter, or B, why again, as a teenager, I just didn't really seem to care, or understand.

I wound up turning that part of my life around and getting through some other terrible adolescent issues, like drugs and alcohol that I was going through. Right as I was getting on the other side of that, I got back into high school, I literally got through my senior year, graduating high school. My dad actually, suddenly became very ill. Suddenly, as in one day, he's 48 and fine and I come downstairs and he literally winds up going to the hospital for what we think is a heart attack, and it turns out his heart's failing, and winds up going on life support and literally, getting put to the top of the list and given super low odds of survival.

For two months, we thought he was going to die. He wound up getting the transplant, so he was lucky. But during that two months, I specifically was very much shook to the core, because up until then, I just didn't really have any direction or urgency, or I wasn't really, I guess, aware of the preciousness of life. I guess, that's probably an easy way. I think a lot of young people obviously feel like that, right? They think they're going to live forever and they think they're never going to – nothing's going to matter and they're going to have plenty of time. That really brought everything into a sudden sharp focus.

[0:23:50] LW: Talk a bit about his lifestyle, too, because he was a very hard worker, right? He leaves the house at 5 in the morning, etc.

[0:23:57] JH: Yeah. Not a complainer either. He was actually in the Vietnam War and he never spoke about it at all. He was incredibly grateful, I think, to have a life and normalcy and family. But he worked a lot. When I say a lot, he went to work at 5 in the morning and got home at 6 or 7 at night and had dinner, did a crossword puzzle, and went to sleep and did that on repeat, Monday through Saturday, usually.

I was really close with my dad, even though I didn't see him in the day, really. He was always a wonderful person to me and my brothers and our family. At the same time, he just worked a ton. I'm sure in his mind, that once we graduated high school, I was literally the youngest one and that he's got a retirement in the future. He's probably got all kinds of things that he wants to do. Suddenly at 48, he's put off all these things for this future that doesn't exist now, or might not exist at all.

That was this thing where when I was at the hospital, walking up and down the halls, waiting to hear either the most terrible news, or that maybe there's a transplant potential, I just kept thinking, how many people are going through this exact same thing? How many people are putting off all their goals and dreams for some future that just might not ever exist? That's really, like again, that's the first time that this idea of what matters in life really started to shift the idea of what we should be valuing.

Again, this was an early point. It wasn't like I suddenly had an epiphany and I was like, "Oh, my God. I have to invest in experiences and that's going to make me a wealthy person in life." It did give me urgency and kicked me off on a journey that led me to have a life that I cannot imagine having had that not happened. I definitely would not have gone on the journey I went on. I can give details on that.

Right after he got the transplant, he started working on his round two of life and he had to redo his whole life. He literally had to change everything. He couldn't even really work ever again. There was all kinds of stuff that went into what he wanted to do and how to get to those moments. I was looking at my life and thinking, "Well, if I'm not guaranteed a certain amount of time, I better try to figure out a way to do the things I want to do or the things that I'll regret not doing because really, that's the thing that really sticks." That's the thing I want to make sure to be clear and share that the health situation my dad faced probably wasn't avoidable, but the regret he would have had, or had at the time for all the things he didn't do, that's the thing that's avoidable.

What we can all take away from that is if we can figure out what those things are early and start checking those things off our list, we can remove so much of that regret in the future that's building. In my case, again, I went off on this journey full of this newfound urgency, but I still had all the same problems that everybody has and everybody lists. I didn't have any – literally, I had very little money, and very little time. I didn't have any connections. I didn't really know where to start and I hadn't really even bothered to figure out what I wanted to do, what mattered to me.

I just started doing the – I basically started figuring out what I would regret if I wound up in that situation. Then I started doing stuff that I could afford to do. I started putting things on my calendar. That was really when things started to change in my life in a remarkable way, because it created movement and momentum, and every little step towards something. Again, it sounds

silly to say like, yeah, I went free diving. It was totally free also in money. I went and learned how to dive in the ocean at a deep level and hold my breath. This is a really, really cool experience.

What did that bring to my future life in terms of business, or financial work? Really not much, I would say. At the same time, it gave me the thought that, "Well, what else do I want to try that I don't know how to do that I could learn?"

[0:28:10] LW: Joe, you're talking about your dad's transplant and all of that, but you're leaving out the best part of the story. Can you talk about his trip to Mexico and how that gave you a real-world example of this experience that really altered his state, his internal state?

[0:28:30] JH: Yeah, of course. My dad, after the transplant the recovery wasn't as smooth as we had hoped. He was honestly feeling pretty ill still and he was going to lots of doctor's appointments and he was stuck by the hospital and he was living in a small apartment with my uncle and things were just not great. So much so that I actually asked him at one point, I said, "Well, at least, I'm sure you're glad that you got the transplant and that worked." He basically looked at me and said, "No, I'm not." There was a moment where life wasn't really turning out like he thought it would be.

He decided to go to Mexico. Him and my uncle had seen Shawshank Redemption, the movie, and then there's a wonderful ending to that wonderful film, where the two prisoners that are sentenced to a life in prison wind up eventually not being in prison anymore.

[0:29:30] LW: Zihuatanejo.

[0:29:31] JH: Zihuatanejo. Exactly, exactly. Actually, I've been there, which is an incredible place. Ironically, my dad didn't make it there. He eventually did on a trip, but him and my uncle set out for Zihuatanejo. My dad never having gone to Mexico, speaking zero Spanish, my uncle speaking a little Spanish, he decided like, "Let's go try to live at the beach." The doctors all said, "No, it's a terrible idea. He's going to be too far from the hospital." My brothers and I talked about it and I talked to the doctors and we were just like, I talked to my dad and I said, "You should go."

We didn't want him to be kept alive. We wanted him to live. Really, that's the major difference, especially in our medical system now. They get that part lost somewhere in translation. Yeah, so he went down there against their recommendations and with all thumbs up on our side, and he didn't even make it to see – he never made it to this beautiful little town called San Carlos, that they stopped there as a pit stop and they got a place temporarily, while they got their bearings to figure out what to do next. It was right on the beach.

Within weeks, his health did this complete 180. I mean, a rebound, like nobody could have predicted, or expected. The doctors, when we started telling them about it, they were like, “Oh, maybe it's the getting removed from this constant orbit of the hospital and all the stress.” Anyway, long story short, he wound up having over a decade there in this little beach town. It was just a completely different person than I ever knew.

My dad didn't do a lot of activities. Didn't seem to have much of a social life, whatsoever growing up. All of a sudden, he was the mayor of this town of colorful expats that lived in this little beach community, that had super funny names, like Captain Bob. They all were just different characters and they would just get together and have the best time ever and he did stuff, like spearfishing and mountain biking and hiking and things that if you had known my dad prior, you would have been like, this is not something that he's interested in, or whatever do.

He was just checking all these boxes. It was just really, really cool to see that transformation. That also was a really an enlightening thing of not everybody. In fact, most people just don't get that second chance. That's why the people that have those near-death experiences, or lose someone that – loses someone, or something close to them happens, they're the ones that go and make that huge change to their life and do that big thing and tell that person that they love them, or hike that mountain, or whatever it is because they got that urgency. Yeah, that was really inspirational.

[0:32:23] LW: A couple of things that stood out to me about that story was that you said, if he played it safe, our idea of playing it safe may be the most dangerous thing that we can do, because he would have stayed in that same situation. He took that leap and I think he was only making what, 1,000 bucks, or 1,600 bucks a month or something. All he got was 400 bucks a month.

[0:32:46] JH: Yeah. Yeah. That's really one of the deciding factors is they wanted to go somewhere peaceful and that they could afford, and Mexico, it was the only place that fit the bill, and they could still get back and forth to the hospital. Yeah, it was definitely – they took a huge chance, a huge, huge chance. Then, there's a big message there that playing it safe, as you just said, can be far riskier, because if they had stayed five years longer in Riverside, California, and next to the hospital, he wouldn't have had this life that was just – I mean, it was full of joy and new and novel experiences. But it took stepping away. We've all seen posters and memes and metaphors, whatever, but you have to lose sight of the shore to get to somewhere that's important to you, right? You got to have that will.

[0:33:46] LW: How did that experience inspire you to take a leap of faith, or bet on yourself?

[0:33:53] JH: Yeah. That's really when I started doing the things that I thought I would regret if I didn't, and I remember the first big thing I did was I had obviously, like a lot of people, I started small by doing some activities that, again, were free. I was free diving. I started cliff diving with some friends. We had a place where we could go and cliff dive into this small little pond, or lake, or whatever you want to call it. That led to us wanting to skydive, which was a bucket list idea, but you couldn't really afford it.

Then we said, “Well, why don't we just plan it?” We did. We said, okay, we're going to do it in two months and we're going to save up and we're going to work odd jobs and figure it out. We did. We went. It was incredible. This is an incredible experience. That's an actual take-a-leap thing, right? That's an actual, go do this thing and jump out of a plane and face this fear and get this experience. When you do that stuff, it tells somewhere inside you that tells you that you can do things if you try, if you plan it, if you take steps.

No matter how big or small the thing is, if you break it down into steps, you'll always be surprised at what you're able to accomplish. That inspired me to have the confidence to try more and more things. Even then, though, I was working multiple jobs that were really challenging. I was doing a lot of manual labor and trying to figure out how to survive and still thinking about the traditional sense of getting rich, while doing all of these things and not realizing that all of these experiences I was having were, I guess, other people were seeing value in those experiences.

People were looking at me and seeing me as someone who could figure out how to get things done and could do cool and interesting things. That led to a friend of mine asking me if I'd start a company with him. When I say a company, this is a gross exaggeration of what most people think of when they think of a company. It's not like, he was like, "Hey, let's start Apple computers." He was like, "I've got a couple thousand dollars and I think we could do something, like make some graphic t-shirts." So, we did. I said, yeah. Well, that turned into an accident. We got a little warehouse, and this is a fun part of the story, but we got a little warehouse that we didn't really actually need, but so that we could build a skateboard ramp in it and skateboard while we were working.

We never got the skate ramp, because what happened was a friend called and said, "Hey, will you help me ship some clothing I have? I know you have that extra space if you haven't built the ramp yet." We put off the ramp and that turned into another friend calling and saying, "I heard you're helping so and so." Then that turned into us somehow having this shipping and logistics company that grew for about a decade. Yeah, all of that, none of that stuff I really believe would have ever happened.

I will say, also, this is something that I don't talk about in the book, but so many of the folks that I wound up working with as I built that company were people that I met and forged these really important relationships with, doing some cool experience. Something that I had organized like, hey, we're going to go on this three-day hike, or hey, we're going to go to the desert and camp and do this fun retreat, or things that you bond over. That's the stuff that makes these really strong lifelong bonds. I think that translates to success in every area.

[0:37:29] LW: You both were accumulating this treasure map, which is the concept you talk about in the book. You describe it as a pivotal concept. Don't skip this step of creating your treasure map, which are the top 10 things you want to do before time runs out. Let's go back to Bridget now. You're in Los Angeles. You're getting broken into a lot. Where are you on your treasure map in terms of the things that you want to accomplish? How does that lead you to Joe?

[0:37:57] BH: Sure. Yeah, like I said, moving to California and Los Angeles was a real dream come true. Something that I had always wanted to do since I was a little kid. I got there. I got here, I still live here, actually. I got here in 2007. I was only 21-years-old. I literally, at the time,

our office in Detroit had shut down. I was contemplating like, can I just get another job here? It's going to be something that I'm not really passionate about, because there's not a lot of entertainment jobs in Michigan. I was just surviving on unemployment.

I had literally a \$100 left. I remember this so vividly. I had got a call from Warner Music Group in Burbank, and I had applied to be an assistant there. They called me and they're like, "We can't really give you that much money, but we can pay you 27 grand a year. But you'll get a lot of cool experiences and a lot of free food and free drinks." I was like, "I'm in."

As you can imagine, \$27,000 a year in Los Angeles, particularly in Hollywood is not a lot of runway. I had a \$100. I was like, I'm in. I bought a Spirit Airlines ticket, which stopped two times on the way from Michigan to California. I left all of my belongings behind, not that I had that many, but I will always remember, I just had a one-way ticket for a \$100 in Spirit Airlines and I was like, "Screw it. I'm just going to leave everything behind. I'm going to follow this dream."

Like many people that live here from all over the country, they come here to follow their dreams. That's what I really love about California. Yeah, I got here. I worked at Warner for a little while. then I ended up getting back into Universal, which was my original dream, was to work in those really, really big labels. I worked there for another, I think, five years after I got that job and I did all kinds of different – I worked with artists when they first got signed. I was meeting people, like Taylor Swift and Drake and Kanye and Justin Bieber, The Killers, and Lady Gaga, The Weekend, all of these people who are literally the biggest stars in the world now. I was meeting them when I was 21, 22-years-old here in LA and just seeing their ascent. It was really cool. Great experience.

At the same time, I was meeting all of these people that had the same passions as me and I was being surrounded by people that I actually felt like, "Oh, my God. I'm inspired and they make me want to be a better person and make me want to keep on following my dreams." I just never had that before. It was a really cool experience.

I was still completely broke, but I was also having all these incredible experiences, like going to parties in the Hollywood Hills and going to the best restaurants, because I was like, my bosses all had corporate credit cards, so they would take us out to all of these places. Yeah, one day I was at my office and I was browsing YouTube and I saw a video of a woman hearing for the first

time. It just made me stop in my tracks and think about how important music and sound had been in my own life, and she was about the same age as me.

It really hit home. Like, what would my life would have looked like if I didn't have that, if I didn't have music and sound in my life? I had an idea. Maybe I could give somebody hearing one day. That would be so cool to just do this for one person. I had the idea of starting a company that was a social enterprise electronics company, which there was none of at the time. There was a couple other companies out there doing similar things like TOMS had just started and Warby Parker had just started, but there was nobody doing anything in music, or in sound.

I was like, I'll just start a headphone and speaker company and do cool products and music and not even thinking about like, "Oh, this is going to compete with the largest companies on earth, like the Apples of the world." I was like, "Yeah, it'll be great. I'll just do it." So ignorant to the size of this industry. It ended up being a blessing being so naive about it because I cashed out my 401k from Universal, which was only \$5,000. I started LSTN and I started it with Joe.

The way that I met Joe is through a mutual friend. My mutual friend had said, "This guy is building schools in Guatemala and providing clean water in Haiti." It was like, all of these things that sounded so cool to me. I didn't know anybody that worked in charity at the time, because charity and the philanthropic space was just so foreign to me, because I just thought it was only billionaires doing these things. When I got introduced to Joe, I was like, "Oh, my God. Normal people can do this?" I was mind-blown that a normal person who wasn't a billionaire could be involved in charity. We met in 2012 right after I had the idea for LSTN. Yeah, we've been partners ever since.

[0:43:35] LW: Joe, what's your recollection of you guys coming together?

[0:43:39] JH: It's funny. Well, as Bridget said, to go up against all of the biggest brands in the world, it's not a great business plan. She needed to find someone equally ignorant, so there I was, full of – hard on my sleeve kind of emotions. But it's interesting, because the back story that gets us to there, my dad's story really was so important at that pivotal moment in my life. At that moment, after his transplant when he moved to Mexico, I actually decided to move to the beach. I literally met a couple of girls at a party that said they wanted a guy roommate, and I moved to the beach two weeks later, because I knew I had to get away from my friends and

where I grew up and to start somewhere fresh. That's where I had been living for the few years, prior to starting a company with my friend.

When we started the company and it started to take off and we started to get all these brands in, one of the brands we got in relatively early on was TOMS. We actually helped TOMS launch and we worked with them for a number of years, until they outgrew us. It was an enlightening experience, much like Bridget's. I just assumed that philanthropy was just some walled garden, full of rich people and tuxedos at thousand-dollar plate dinners, or something I just literally couldn't even ever possibly understand, because I didn't come from that. That was really cool.

I was like, it's democratizing philanthropy. Whether you agree with the method that they did, the idea of social enterprise really stuck with me. Ten years later, the company that my partner and I built called Ramp Logistics, we actually had about a hundred employees and it was in this giant warehouse and all these things were happening, and my dad got sick again. This time, it was the tail end of his life. This one didn't have the Hail Mary pass with the heart transplant. He got cancer, which is really common for people that have transplants, because of the immunosuppressant drugs they take.

He was winding down. We brought him home for some in-home hospice care. I just remember, again, just sitting there thinking like, "What does he care about?" This is when he notes, it's the end of his life. My dad was just a really super intelligent person. It was just really apparent, the conversations and the things that we talked about. It was all the stuff he did that made a difference, that made the world better. He didn't have a lot of ways to do that. Remarkably, when he was in Mexico, he actually started a charity, more or less by accident by starting to give money. He was making \$716 a month. He started giving. Him and another friend were giving a \$100 to this family that lived in an actual dump, for lack of a better word. It's like a garbage collection yard thing, where they had shanties. They started donating money.

Then some other friends heard about it. They were like, "Well, if you guys are doing it, we'll donate, too." Literally, that grew. It's still in existence. It's a pretty big organization down in that neck of the woods called Castaway Kids. But they've helped hundreds of kids go all the way through college now, provided education, all these things, all started with one person and a \$100. He was really, really proud of that, of course.

At that moment, it gave me that inflection moment, again, of saying, well, what is my treasure map right now? Because it changes as things happen.

I felt really lucky and fortunate to have built this successful company and have financial security for the first time in my entire life. By the way, I didn't have any money in the bank. There was some money on paper because I had this company, but I literally had been paying myself \$40,000 a year for a number of years and had just upped my salary to around \$80,000, I think, at the time. I wasn't like, again, this was far from your friends on Wall Street. It's definitely, I was surviving.

I said to my business partner, "I don't want to do this." I started thinking about it. I was like, as much as this is probably a really successful financial future, it's going to take another decade or so to build it into something that is really, really worth it "for the old school rich." At that time in my life, there was just so many things I wanted to do. I didn't know what I wanted to do. Crazy enough, again, TOMS had worked with us years before and they had left years before. I got an email from them saying that they were donating their 1 millionth shoe. That was the moment it all clicked. I was like, "I need to just leave and start something that can give back now. Not when I'm rich. Not when I'm Bill Gates and all those types of things."

The reality is, as much as I have confidence in my ability to get things done, I'm not sure that I'll be "rich financially" ever and I don't really care. But I know I can do something now while I'm able, and that's what I'll care about. That's how I wound up in Guatemala, building schools and then Haiti, giving water filtration and doing that other stuff. That's how Bridget found me and connected. When she connected with me, she showed me this video. I didn't really talk about it in the young age story, but music was always an escape for me. It was definitely a huge part of my life. I was really into same thing, a lot of classic rock, but also a lot of punk rock and a lot of hip hop. Just really everything from the era.

I remember, one of the first things I did when I was younger at Columbia Record House, you could do the subscription to get actual physical albums in the mail. My parents would never have done that and let me do that. I just filled it out with a fake name. Back then, they didn't have computers to really check this stuff. We just got 12 albums in the mail one day and then I just never responded to anything. That was my record collection. I don't recommend that, but that was what I did.

When Bridget showed me this video of this girl hearing for the first time, it was just so powerful. It was just like, wow, the idea of somebody not hearing and them being able to hear and how important music's been in our lives. I was just all in. Bridget cut our story, I guess, short, because after that moment we met, we literally high-fived. This is an absolute non-exaggeration. This isn't like an anecdote for interview. We literally flew to China a week later with just a handshake. I was like, let's go figure out how to make headphones and speakers. How hard can that be? Well, we'll draw some stuff, we'll get some stuff that we like.

We went and we figured it out. That was actually to the end of the year. By March of the following year, we launched the brand. By August of the following year, we were actually on the ground doing our first hearing mission. We were literally sitting there with these plastic chairs, where all of the people would come and sit down to get fitted with hearing aids to see if they could hear or not. It was just a really powerful experience.

There was an 18-year-old girl who came. It was her actual 18th birthday. It was a moment that again, Bridget and I, I'm sure, we'll never ever – there's no possible way to forget this moment, because their parents explained to us that it took them three days to get there, they took buses and walked and had to hike over. It was just a journey. But she had never been to the doctor and they wanted – she'd been deaf her whole life, or unable to hear her whole life. They wanted to just know that she could never hear. They wanted to confirm it for sure. They actually didn't really expect her to be able to hear.

She sat in this chair and we put the hearing aids in. It wasn't even like 10 seconds later, she's crying and her mom's crying and her dad's crying and we're crying. The tragedy of the story is we didn't film any of this, by the way, because we were all crying. But we should have captured it, because it was such a powerful moment. That was the beginning of a decade of traveling around the world and giving over 50,000 people hearing. That's all started from Bridget's \$5,000 401k and her idea and me being dumb enough to think that Apple and Samsung and Sony and Bose aren't that big of a problem.

[0:51:55] LW: Bridget, technical question, how does a hearing aid work?

[0:51:59] BH: It's basically, amplification. Everywhere we go actually has different hearing aids, which I think is interesting. But it's really all about amplifying the sound. Nine out of 10 people who can't hear can actually hear with a hearing aid. There's always one out of 10 that has to use something more powerful, like a body aid, or surgery, or something. I've learned so much about that world. It's so interesting. It's the number one disability in the world is hearing, which you would never thought that, because it doesn't get the love in the media, which a lot of other causes do that are also worthy causes, of course. But you would think that hearing would get more. That was another reason why we wanted to do this is because there was no one talking about this issue, and it's very solvable in terms of giving somebody a hearing aid.

[0:52:53] LW: It's a speaker inside of your ear, basically. I know you got this partnership with Delta, which is fantastic, but can you give us a snapshot of how that came to be? What leaps of faith that you have to take in order for that to happen?

[0:53:07] BH: Sure. Yeah, after we started the company, we raised a little bit of money. We never did a huge round of financing or anything like that. How we did grow the brand is to link up with these large corporations that lacked an authentic story, as I like to say. They were borrowing our authenticity. One of the first things that we did was we did a commercial with Google, where they chose us out of all of these brands and they came to our office and our office was literally 200 square feet. It was tiny.

They came with all of these people and it looked like, they were filming a Game of Thrones episode, or something. It was so crazy to us. Yeah, that video ended up getting 50 million-plus views. The video was about our story with LSTN and how this YouTube video inspired us to start this ripple effect of the brand.

Then after that, we actually ended up meeting somebody from Delta Airlines at a party. He was a great guy and he ended up buying the headphones and then he contacted us afterward and was like, "I love the product. What can we do together?" At first, it was just going to be a little partnership. But over the next three years, it turned out to be, we made millions of headphones for Delta Airlines and we got to do this huge commercial with them in Peru. Basically, every person in business class that was on a Delta flight would use our headphones and then they would have the bag which told the story and then they'd also see the commercial that we made in Peru.

The commercial was about these two boys that were hearing for the first time that were brothers. It's such a great spot if you have a chance to check it out. I loved that whole experience. That was one of my favorite things I've ever done in my life was to see this brand that I had ideated in my dining table, basically, like grow to this thing that was this worldwide commercial and cause. It was so cool.

[0:55:19] LW: That's what's interesting about this, because without realizing it, you're becoming experiential billionaires, but you're also becoming financially stable through just following your curiosity and having these experiences. Let's talk a little bit about how that concept of experiential billionaire came to be and then I want to talk about the framework of that.

[0:55:40] BH: Sure. I think it's funny. Yeah, I think that the assumption was that we were getting really, really rich around this time, because we were on The Today Show and Good Morning America. We literally had Kim Kardashian writing about how much she loves us and stuff like that, which was awesome.

[0:55:59] LW: You have to kick money down to walk into your –

[0:56:01] BH: Yeah. But the reality of the situation is that we were doing fine. We were surviving and we were super happy, and it was great, but we weren't paying ourselves that much, because we were using the money that we were making to give it away, to give people hearing and then to pay for the flights and the hotels and all the stuff that we're doing around the world, like it costs money to travel to give people hearing. All of the money was actually going to that.

There was one year that I was on the Forbes and Inc., 30 under 30. This is in 2015. I thought it was – I was obviously so honored and I loved it, but I also thought it was hilarious, because I was like, “There's no way I belong here.” Not unless they met 30 people with less than \$30 in their bank. That was actually the impetus of *Experiential Billionaire* because Joe and I would joke all the time, like when people were like, “You guys are killing it,” and they saw some Forbes and they'd be like, “Oh, can I borrow some money?” I'm like, “I don't have any money, but we are experiential billionaires.”

Even then, it was like, even in my social media profile, it was about me and I would put experiential billionaire. This whole inside joke has been going on for a long time. But it turns out, it is real and that is really how we feel and we feel like we've just lived these lives that are so full of riches that we're living like a billionaire, or better than.

[0:57:51] LW: Joe, talk about the principles of the *Experiential Billionaire*, the ones that you guys list out in the book.

[0:57:58] JH: Yeah, absolutely. The book itself and the platform and what this current shape of experiential billionaire is in the world started when COVID happened. When the world shut down, there was a lot of things that happened simultaneously in our lives. That's irrelevant, because that's when we started to put this all into a shape and what it was in the form of tools to help other people live this way because what happened was we stopped doing the missions. We realized it was very clear to us then that everything that we wanted out of this company was through giving people hearing, not selling headphones and speakers.

As soon as we stopped doing the missions, we looked at how we could help people improve their lives and we reached out to a bunch of folks and said, "Hey, what do you think would be the most impactful thing that Bridget and I could do?" Everyone kept coming back and saying, "You guys might not realize it, but all of these stories that you share, all of these things you're doing are incredibly inspirational to other people. Because it shows other people that you could do that, too." Because people, especially the people that know us, they know where we came from and they know that it's not some situation where we're like a trust fund kid that's just like, "Hey, I'm going to travel the world." Or some travel influencer. Far from it. I post once a year.

Literally, when we heard all that, we started looking at okay, well, what does it mean to be an experiential billionaire that we joke about? When we started to do the deep dive into the research around it all, it just started to make so much more sense in a really clear way. We didn't stop, by the way, with the research. We actually did our own. We did a survey of about 20,000 people, asking them what the most important experiences of their lives are, what the most valuable things have ever done, what their biggest regrets were, why they regret them, and what stops them from doing those things.

It all just came back to this data set of like, these are all the things people regret. By the way, there's a lot of studies about regret and about the things people regret toward the end of their life. The thing that was really interesting about our survey is a lot of those results were across all ages. I thought that was really interesting. People had the same types of regrets about all the things that they didn't do, or weren't doing.

It started to just become really clear that there was this giant regret that was hanging over most people, three out of four people based on just about all the studies or more about all the stuff they wanted to do and didn't do. This isn't just bucket list. This isn't like, I always wanted to climb Mount Everest or travel to a 100 countries. This is simple stuff. This was tons and tons of answers we got from 20,000 people that were things like, I always wanted to go back to Arizona where I grew up, or I always wanted to speak better Japanese, so I could learn more of my family history, or I always wanted to play the guitar, things that you could solve for that people waited until they were out of time. It was too late.

We started to put together the book. As a framework of just all the research and tools, and then it started to become more clear that sharing stories made that a lot easier. Then our stories were really easy examples to use. The first thing that we talk about is the treasure map. It's really finding and rediscovering what your dreams and goals are because so many people bury them away. They had goals and dreams that they started putting off to this fictional someday in the future. We like to call that someday syndrome. Then they just forgot about them, because they assume that someday, it's just going to magically happen and it's just not on top of mind.

Or, even maybe finding it in the first place if it's something that you never thought of, but you need to figure that out. The tool to do that to create that urgency, minus the near-death experiences is we run through an exercise where we have people imagine that their doctor called and said, "Hey, I've got some bad news. You've only got a year left to live." Then, what are the 10 things that you know if you don't do those 10 things in this next year, you're going to be filled with just immeasurable regret, so you have to do those things.

Then once people write those things down, we have them go through another phase of this exercise, where it's the 30-day call. The doctor calls back. "You know what? Read the test results wrong. You've actually only got 30 days. I'm really sorry about that. I want to make some

changes.” Write down the 10 things you would do if it was only 30 days. Again, really things you could do in the amount of time left. What are the most important things that you would do?

Then one more time, the doctor calls. “This guy's about to get his license revoked, because it's malpractice all day long, but you've got 24 hours.” What are the five things you would do in the next 24 hours, your last 24 hours? It's interesting. The reason we do the three stages of this exercise and I think it's really helpful for people to see is those are different things. Obviously, there would be different things if you had five years, or 10 years because certain things take longer. But you can see the through lines.

The one-day stuff is always called the people you love and do those types of things that you could do in one day. The 30-day thing is a little bit bigger things that are going to take maybe some real effort. The year things are things that could take real – things that you may have thought impossible up until the moment you realize how important it was to you, and then you start thinking about how I could actually get that done. Then when we asked people at the end of this exercise, how many of any of those things are you working on? The answer is almost always none, across the board. Literally, almost none of any of those things are on your calendar now. Why? Why are these things the most important thing that you would do if you knew your time was finite? They're not on your calendar now?

The sad truth is your time is finite. You just haven't realized it or made that connection in a real enough way. You don't know if next year is guaranteed. That exercise helps people really see some things that they probably have put off or haven't really seen. Then once you get that as a guidepost, this is like the compass, the way forward from that that we go through in the book is how to visualize the next step. You have to create that urgency with that first step. Then, how do you visualize what that future actually looks like? Then how do you take action, create that momentum, start breaking it down, the baby steps required. It's really goal planning, goal setting. We have a lot of really cool tools around that.

How to identify the smaller things? Because to us, I think that again, there's a misconception that all of the things for experiential wealth are these big-ticket items, but the gold really isn't all the everyday stuff, because that's where it all accrues. If you can fill up every day with a handful of little things that matter, you're going to have a lot more success financially/experientially wealthy lives.

Then the last parts of the book, we go through those core categories that really make that wealth happen, and that's relationships, learning, getting through the excuses of time, money, and fear. We live in a society where our time is being stolen constantly with technology. There's a lot of benefits to technology, obviously, but using it correctly is incredibly important. Then living forever, like the legacy type of thing. Basically, always learning and playing.

We didn't just go through our lives and think these are the things that would matter. This is based on the answers in the survey. These are the things people said mattered the most to them. They fell really easily into these buckets. The legacy one really, is how to live forever. That's the thing where doing things that you know at the end of your life, you're going to feel great about because it made a difference in somebody's day. Again, you don't have to start the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, or whatever the heck your support. There's 1.6 million charities, I think in the US right now.

All you need to do is some positive things in the world every day and you're going to feel pretty good about that. That's really, I guess, the key to removing so much of that regret is once you identify that treasure map list and start checking those boxes, you're taking those away from this future regret. As you get better and better at it, you start redoing this treasure map and basically, you get better at evolving, I guess. I'm sure Bridget has a lot to add.

[1:06:53] LW: Bridget, within that framework, you guys talk about taking radical responsibility. What does that have to do with being an experiential billionaire?

[1:07:00] BH: It goes back to the whole someday concept of a lot of people's excuses are all due X someday. The reality is that you have to do it now because there's an exercise in the book. The first exercise is a momentum worry chart, which is 76 boxes. That's the average lifespan of an American. It's actually 74 for men and 78 for women. I actually have a printed-off version right on my bookshelf, because I look at it every single day and it gives me the urgency to do the things that I want to do and not make excuses on why.

Taking radical responsibility is basically just taking away all of your excuses on why you can't do what you want to do. Those excuses are usually time, which everyone has the same 24 hours.

Of course, there's going to be pushback on when I say that, because people will be like, "Oh, I have kids, or I have school."

[1:07:55] JH: You're privileged and blah, blah, blah.

[1:07:56] BH: Yeah. Everybody has those things. What you can do is take the time that you might watch a TV show, or do something else and do something that you really want to do. If you always were like, "Someday, I'm going to learn how to surf. Or someday, I'm going to learn how to make dumplings." Just a little thing. It's like, okay, take that time this week. Make that Sunday experience Sunday. Do it on Sunday.

I think, a lot of the book is about taking away those excuses, because at the end of the day, you only have to answer to yourself. That's why three out of four people regret the things that they don't do. It's like, at the end of the day, they're like, "Oh, I could have done that, but I didn't do that. That's the number one thing I regret in my life." I love the concept around someday syndrome and taking that away from people's excuses.

[1:08:56] LW: Joe, you're a guy, I'm a guy, you're talking about believing in the make believe. I could see a lot of guys hearing that and pushing back. What do you mean by believing in make believe?

[1:09:10] JH: Oh, man. I mean, it's about your inner child. It's about playing. It's about remembering what it's like to be a kid because kids know they're in the moment. They know we only have the moment they never get. They're not thinking about the future. Again, that's where the real wealth lies. When you do something strictly for the fun of it, and there's a big difference in my opinion. We talked a lot about this, Bridget and I, as we wrote the book. The goal of learning something new, for instance, like if you want to play guitar, which is fun, you're still trying to get better at it.

There's games and things you do that are fun just for fun. You don't want to get better at it. You just want to do it, because the actual act of doing it is fun. There's no level of it. To me, breaking down that barrier, whether it's because you think I'm a guy and I can't have fun like that anymore or whatever, or whatever your reason or rationale is, I guarantee you, once you do that

thing and you have fun and you're like, "I should do that more often. I should do that all the time."

Like Bridget was just saying, at the end of the day, whatever your reason was for not doing it, you're not going to care about that. You're going to think, "That was dumb. I should have done that because other people are doing that and having fun." We talked about that with, that's the same with fear, the things that we don't do. We just grossly underestimate the potential outcome of something, of trying something, and what the positive outcome could be. Then we overestimate tremendously what the negative outcome could be.

Most of the time, the negative outcome is not that bad, and the potential positive outcome is really, really, really good. When you look at stuff, just like for instance, imagine if you and four guy friends had a squirt gun fight in the backyard at somebody's house, you know that would be fun. When's the last time you planned one? 20 years ago? Why? It's like, \$7 to go buy some water guns. Do stuff like that. Fill it with your day, instead of scrolling on your phone, or doing whatever you do. Make a memory that you're going to have forever and that's going to add value to your life. We have a lot of examples of the stuff like that that we think are really fun. You can also just learn a lot from watching kids.

[1:11:28] BH: Yeah. That was one of my favorite chapters to write. I was laughing the entire time when we were writing it, because the whole book – I mean, not the whole book, but a couple of the chapters in the book are pretty dark and deep and very about urgency and life and death. That chapter is all about just having a good time. I loved writing it. I loved thinking about what are my most memorable things.

One of the questions in the survey of the 20,000 people was, think about something you did when you were a kid, and then think about why you don't do that anymore. All of these answers were like, "I caught fireflies. I played hide and seek. I played truth or dare." It's like, all of those things are free. Why don't you do them anymore and bring that value into your life? I think that, unintentionally, that was one of the most impactful questions that we had and one of the most impactful chapters. It really came at it from more of a have fun type of thing. People just forget to have fun as adults. I love that chapter.

[1:12:35] LW: The message is start where you are. You don't have to go and see the Northern Lights. You don't have to go to Peru. You don't have to go and do an ayahuasca ceremony in Colombia. Just start with creating experiences where you are with free stuff and with people that are already around you, or with yourself, if that's where you are.

[1:12:54] BH: Paint something. Do something that's fun and creative and not about being the best. I'm not going to be in MoMA anytime soon, but I like to paint things. I like to make up jokes. I'm not going to be on HBO telling stand-up set, but I like to make those things up.

[1:13:15] JH: You don't know where that's going to lead. This is a part of this magical cycle, where fun, new, novel meaningful experiences create strong bonds and relationships. Then those strong bonds and relationships give a lot more opportunity for more meaningful experiences. I've got some really easy examples. I actually started with two friends of mine in LA. We went and started playing a pickup game of soccer in a park. None of us had played soccer in 15 years at this point, since we were kids. We were like, okay, let's play soccer.

Some other friends heard and came the next weekend. The next weekend, they brought friends. I'm not even kidding, by the fifth weekend, there was 60 people showing up. There was college, literally, actual amazing athletes. A couple of ex-pros came. It got so good to the point where I couldn't play anymore. I was like, I'm not good enough to play. This was free and it started. It was just this really fun thing. The reason I use that as an example is a lot of these people that I wound up playing soccer with, they actually started working with me, because they had companies and I had this logistics business.

Then from there, we had this other relationship that developed. That's what happens with these small – you could have a literally random game of freeze tag in your backyard, and build some new friendships that could lead to something completely unexpected and extremely valuable in your life. That's why it's so important to do those things because you know when you're not going to get that extremely unexpected valuable thing, if you're in some monotony of doing something like, “Well, it's easier for me to just sit on my couch and scroll Netflix, or do this thing, or I'm just using something to waste time, because I don't really know what else to do,” it's so easy to do stuff with other people that will create strong bonds.

[1:15:18] LW: Yeah, look, this sounds like a great idea. When people write books and I know you all give talks about this. A lot of listeners may hear that and go, “Oh, I couldn't do that, because you have to be anointed by whoever the governing agency of people will give talks, or write books are.” I'm always curious, what's the backstory? How did you all decide, “Okay, let's take this concept and do something with it.” Did someone bring you into their organization and say, talk about this thing that you're calling experiential billionaire? how did you decide to get a book deal? How did all that happen?

[1:15:52] BH: We definitely didn't have anyone ask us to come speak on this topic, or anything like that. We truly felt this was the best thing that we could do with our time is to help other people have meaningful experiences in their life. I really feel that to my core. After Starkey and LSTN, like stopped doing the missions in 2020, we felt a deep loss of purpose and we were searching for that purpose.

Like Joe was saying earlier, we asked people, what should we do? We're lost right now. Everybody said, “Tell your story.” We had no idea how to start writing a book, or to start speaking. Every day, we do more research about it. We started just writing out – one of my favorite parts of the process actually, was just writing out all of our favorite memories. We would talk on the phone all day and just say like, “Remember when we were in Rwanda and this happened? That was so crazy.” Then we went through all of our photos of the last 12 years that we've had as business partners.

It was just a long process, but it was really cool. It was in that space in 2020, I was actually going through a really bad depression. This is part of what helped me out of that. It's like, going over all of these nostalgic moments that we've had as partners, but also, with my own friends and with my family and with all these things that we've done in our lives. I was like, I can't not do this. This is what I want to do. I want to go right. I want to speak. I want to help other people do the things that they want to do, because it will improve their lives. I don't think that there's anything – like, that's my gift to the world and that's my gift in me. I think that Joe feels the same way.

Yeah, we didn't have a plan. There's been a lot of bumps along the road. I'm sure, as being part of the speaking community, you've heard about our journey with the publisher and how the publisher shut down five days after we turned in the book and things like that. There was a lot –

[1:17:59] LW: I didn't hear that. What happened with that?

[1:18:02] JH: That's a pretty story.

[1:18:03] BH: Yeah, there's been a lot of stories and there's a lot of –

[1:18:06] JH: A lot of wealth in there.

[1:18:07] BH: Yeah. Well, I mean, first of all, so we started the book process with my mental health breakdown in 2020. All these things were happening. I got separated. I moved. I had a break-in at my place. LSTN was really struggling, so we weren't paying ourselves. I was not only financially not there, I was emotionally not there. A lot of things happening. Then over time, we had a publisher and then the publisher shut down, and I'll let Joe tell this story, but a really big personal thing happened with his wife, and he can tell the story, but it's just part of this whole roller coaster.

It wasn't like, we decided one day that we were just going to wake up and write this book and it was all going to be smooth and easy and that's how it is. It's hard to do anything big. Now that it's done, I can look back and I'm so proud of this book and it's the greatest thing I've ever done in my life. I feel like this is my life's work and I just want to continue doing this. Even though it was so hard, and I think that's a lesson in itself, is to do the hard things. Because it might be hard in the moment, but when you're done with it, you're like, "Oh, my God. I'm so glad that I did that and that I persevered."

[1:19:24] JH: There was a moment where we talked about it, I remember. We said, what's the expectation? If we write this book, what do we really think we're going to achieve? I remember saying like, I think we can really help people. I think we can help change people's lives. I was like, even if we help a hundred people, that's really cool. What's the downside? If we can get this done and we can keep our expectation at we're going to help people, I don't know how many, but that's the only goal. We're not trying to make the book into some – we're going to create some billion-dollar financial empire or something.

By looking at it like that, it made it like, yeah, could it do that? It absolutely can do that. We knew it could do that and we've gotten a lot of really incredible feedback. The personal story, I think, is a testament to the lifestyle itself being so powerful. I'll share a really brief version of it. We wrote the first draft of the book, and it was finished in the middle of 2022. We had planned on launching it in October of that year.

Right after we finished the first draft of the book and started the revisions, my wife was suddenly diagnosed with cancer. It was a completely out of nowhere experience. We had two kids and at the time, our youngest was only three-months-old and our oldest was two and a half. We had to put everything on hold, obviously, with the book and everything else in life for a while, while she battled cancer. She did it. She went through six months of chemotherapy and the double mastectomy and six weeks of radiation and all this stuff that you think, how tough you think you are in the world. Watching my wife go through that. I mean, the women and the people that go through cancer and come out survivors are just, I have nothing but the most incredible respect and offer them and their fortitude.

She got through to the other side. As soon as we found out that the treatments were working and this was about six months in, that things were looking good, and Bridget and I, I started really working on the book again and Bridget had been trying to keep things moving. It was really interesting, because this really speaks to the message of the book, because my wife and I talked about what we were going to do post her cancer. Once it was all done. She still had six more months left of treatments, even though we were pretty sure it was working. Nothing changed. Our plans were the same, as they were before she got diagnosed because we had been doing all this work. We knew what our treasure maps were. We knew what we wanted to do.

My dad had to change his entire life post-heart transplant because it was not what he wanted. He was stuck in this path, unaware, unwittingly. With my wife and I, we were like, wow, we actually – there's not a big thing. There was no regret for how we spent the last decade together because we had traveled together to dozen-plus countries and done all of these crazy things that we wanted to do, big and small, but because we thought about it and we planned it and we filled up our time. That's really the message.

There was a moment in my life prior, before, as we were thinking about doing the book that I think sums up that feeling. I remember talking to some friends about it. That's like, if you were to get, again, there's a lot of death in these conversations. I hope people don't think this is morbid. It's actually just a way to contemplate the idea of the finality of life in a way to make you motivated. If you were to suddenly walk out and get hit by a car today, and you would be lying on the ground, would you be satisfied? Would you think that you were living the life that you wanted to live for yourself? Or would that be the moment that – and that last moment where it's just you and yourself, you actually have to admit to yourself, “I didn't try. I didn't do the things I wanted. I made excuses.” That's powerful.

If you can think to yourself, “If something happened to me today,” like even now, I think about that often, I know I'm trying really, really hard. Not everything's working, not even close, but what we're trying. I think that's really comforting to know that at least have a lot less regret than I think I would if I wasn't.

[1:23:50] LW: What's interesting is I've never talked about this publicly. I've only only told one person this in my entire life. When I leave my house during the day, when I just go run errands, or whatever, I do think to myself, this could be the last time I'm in this place. I'm going to make up my bed and straighten it up, because if someone has to come in here –

[1:24:11] BH: Oh, my God. I literally do the same thing.

[1:24:13] LW: They go through my stuff. I don't want this to be out. I wonder what story they're going to make up about that. It also puts me in the space of, this could be the last day. Let me be as present as I can possibly be on a day-to-day basis. I think that's a great way to live. I think, more people should live like that. Yeah, that's cool that you do it, too, Bridget.

[1:24:37] BH: I literally did it yesterday. I went to Whole Foods and I made my bed, and I was like, “What am I doing?”

[1:24:44] JH: My wife would divorce me if I didn't make the bed.

[1:24:50] BH: Same. No one here, but my dog stuff.

[1:24:53] LW: Well, look, I love the book. I'm a huge fan. I'm going to go back and really – I read it for the podcast interview, but I didn't read it, read it. I'm going to do the exercises and everything. I'm going to go back and really dive in. I encourage everyone listening and watching this to do the same thing. Where can people connect with both of you?

[1:25:13] BH: Sure. Our website is experientialbillionaire.com, and that's the same for our Instagram. Our personal sites where we book our workshops and keynotes are bridgethillton.com and joe Huff.com.

[1:25:27] LW: You all have some supplementary exercises that I saw you reference in the book.

[1:25:33] BH: Yeah. All of the exercises are actually on the website for free. If anyone wants to check them out, please do. Please, let us know if this conversation, or the book, or our keynote, or any of our resources inspire you, we love to hear what people do with this information.

[1:25:51] LW: Beautiful. Well, thank you all so much again for taking the time to come on and share your story. Thanks for all the effort you had to put in to get this book out into the world. It truly is making the world a better place. We've known each other professionally for several months now. I had no idea what – I mean, I heard the concept at one of the conferences that we were all at, but I didn't know the depth of the stories.

It's funny, because I had assumptions based on the way you all present yourselves and based on how you look. I found myself just laughing out loud, while I was reading your book and just thinking about the experiences you actually had compared to the ones that I thought you had. It's just another reminder. You can't ever judge a book by its cover.

[1:26:42] BH: Now I want to hear what you thought of us.

[1:26:44] LW: Well, I just thought, "Oh, yeah. They're probably come from money and they're privileged and that kind of thing."

[1:26:50] BH: Oh, man. I wish.

[1:26:53] LW: Reading your story. Getting arrested especially and Joe's story of what happened with his dad. I mean, those are very inspiring. Lots of inspiring stories in the book. We'll put everything in the show notes and I want everybody to get this book, *Experiential Billionaire*. I look forward to seeing you guys again in person.

[1:27:12] BH: Oh, thanks.

[1:27:12] JH: Thanks, Light. Yeah, we really enjoyed it. Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[1:27:17] LW: Thank you for tuning in to my interview with authors and speakers, Bridget Hilton and Joe Huff. You can grab a copy of *Experiential Billionaire* everywhere books are sold. I highly recommend following Bridget and Joe's journey on the socials @experientialbillionaire. Of course, I'll put links to everything that we talked about in the show notes, which you can always find at lightwatkins.com/podcast.

If you enjoyed our conversation and you found it inspiring and you're now thinking to yourself, "Wow, I'd love to hear Light interview someone like Richard Branson, or somebody like that," here's how you can help to make that interview happen. You see, I reach out to people like Richard Branson all the time, and some of them accept, a lot of them don't. The thing you can do to help me get people onto the podcast is to simply leave a rating, or review. Because when I reach out to people and their gatekeepers get my email, inviting them onto the show, the first thing they do is they go to my podcast page and they want to see how engaged of an audience I have. They can tell that through the ratings and the reviews.

That's why you always hear podcasters like me say, "Please leave a rating, please leave a review." It's not just some vanity metric. It actually helps to get bigger guests onto the podcast, so we can have conversations about people that you've heard about before. Here's what you do, you click on your screen, you scroll down past those first six or seven episodes, you'll see a space with five blank stars, click the one on the right and you've given us a five-star rating. If you want to go the extra mile, that would always be appreciated. Write a one-line review about what you appreciate from this podcast. Thank you very much in advance for that.

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All right, I look forward to hopefully seeing you back here next week with another story about someone just like me, just like you, taking a leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. Until then, keep trusting your intuition, keep following your heart, keep taking those leaps of faith. If no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you, sending you lots of love. Have a great day.

[END]