

Theresa: Hello, and welcome to another episode of the Your Next Best Step Podcast. I am Theresa Cantley, and I am your host. And I am joined today by the lovely, very funny, wonderful Mary Bicknell. Hopefully I pronounced that right, Bicknell?

Mary: Yeah.

Theresa: Awesome, awesome. I'm so excited to have you here.

Mary: We're going to have a great conversation.

Theresa: This is going to be an amazing conversation. I met Mary this year in a program that we're in, and let me tell you, I feel like I've known this woman forever. She is going to drop so many truth bombs and insights. And so, you are going to want to get some pen and paper, and just get a cup of coffee, or tea, or whatever you drink, and listen to this chat, because it is going to be amazing. And I just want to tell you, Mary, when I was doing some reading on everything, my favorite color is green too.

Mary: Is it? I love green. In fact, you probably... Can you... I know you can see, the audience can't see, but I have my-

Theresa: Oh, they can see.

Mary: Oh, okay. Hi. Okay. I have two green velvet chairs back here. I love green. I love it. It makes me feel good. And I'm drinking my green drink right here.

Theresa: There you go, there you go. My first business, my brick and mortar retail store, our colors were green and purple, because my business partner's favorite color was purple, mine was green. So yeah. But I read that, I was like, oh, my favorite color is green too.

Mary: Yeah, okay.

Theresa: Look at all the stuff we have in common. Yay. And I also read in your thing that you had a degree in interior design. I was like, wait, what? Because you have, and we're going to get into this when we talk about your background, but you've got many degrees. So, amazing, amazing stuff. But before we get into that, I just want to introduce who you are. So, Mary Bicknell, LCSW, speaker, author, podcaster, and former psychotherapist turned personal development coach and leadership mentor for women who want more out of life and out of themselves. And believe me, today, when we talk, you're going to totally get that. Mary takes a stand for women choosing to be bold, showing up fully, grabbing everything they want personally and professionally, and doing so all unapologetically and guilt-free. I can read.

Mary: Yeah, it's good.

Theresa: Awesome, awesome. So, let's get into your background. How did you get started? What is your... You have so many amazing things in your background. I'm just going to pull out three that I was... My jaw dropped. Number one, you marched in Washington DC for

women's rights, which is unbelievable, and, right, touches my heart. You lobbied at the Maryland Capitol in Annapolis for hungry children, which, again, is something that is near and dear to me. And this one really... You were in Oklahoma City during the bombing. And you also helped on the trauma team, which is just unbelievable. Unbelievable. So, like I said, I was reading all these things, and I was like, oh, my God, not only is she so funny, and so helpful, and so... Can just read people really well, and just knows what they need, but you have these just amazing things that you've done in your life. Plus the fact that you have a beautiful girl, River.

Mary: Yes, she is beautiful. Oh my god, she's getting ready to... She's in 10th grade. I started crying in third grade, "You're going to be moving out one day," and she's like, "I'm only a third grade, mama." But now she's in 10th grade. She's an inch... Almost... I think she's two and a half inches taller than I am. She's a tall goddess. Brilliant. She's so good. I feel like, thank you, Jesus. She's such an amazing girl. So, yes, I'm happily married to my hunky husband, John. And we have this beautiful daughter, River.

Theresa: Awesome, awesome. So, tell us a little bit about, besides what I said so far, but tell us a little bit about your background, and how you got started doing the things that you do, because I know you've gone through some iterations in your career, in your life. So, tell us a little bit about it.

Mary: It's like what we talked about before we hit record, right? It's this next evolution. I'm a big believer in being on the edge of your own evolution. And my brand is all about how to lead a life uncommon, right? Being bold. Bold means, stands for being a brave outgoing leader deciding to write your own rules, lead a life uncommon unapologetically and guilt-free. And that was really... There's so many moments, it's like... Even you sharing the March on Washington, and lobbying, I have done a lot. And just all of the listeners have done a lot. And I think what happens is we need to sit back and sit down and write those things out. Because when we have those moments, we're like, oh my god, I don't know what I want to do. It's like, shit, you've probably lived a lot of life. I've been married before. I've been single. I've lived by myself. I worked at Johns Hopkins. I've done a lot of things. And I think that sometimes what happens is we forget how talented and how capable and how amazing we are, because life happens, and then it's like, pack the lunch, go to school, the dog just went in the trash right before this call.

And so, I have done a lot of things. And I forget, to be quite honest. So, thank you so much for sharing and doing some research and reminding me of those moments. When I marched on in DC for women's right, and it's timely if you're listening to this in real time, there's recently some legal things going on in our country around women's rights. And I remember that so clearly. In fact, I remember, and it's probably because I have a picture somewhere, I have to dig it out and share it, I had a London Fog emerald green coat on, and I was in my early 20s. And I bought that coat, it was 100 bucks, and I felt like a rock star. So, not only was I marching, but it's also these other things, these other moments that are telling. And I think the thing is, so frequently, we remember the negative things. And our brain is designed to remember negative things. It's biologically programmed to do this. And so, when I work with my clients, and I know you know this too, because we've had other conversations, when we're nervous about doing

something, our brain defaults to the negative for the proof of, you can't do this thing, you can't do it.

Well, it's designed to do that. If you know this on the front end, that it's designed to do that, and then you remember, holy crap, I've done a lot of cool things, then you're more apt to do a lot of really cool things in the future. And so, like we said before you and I pushed record, it's like, I'm on the cusp, right? I'm on that edge of my own evolution. What's the next thing? And gleefully, right? Gleefully, what's the next thing, and not from a place of, oh, my God, this thing is... This doesn't work. Not from a bad place, but from the, holy God, we are so capable of so many things. And I don't want to be common. I want, I choose to lead a life uncommon. I choose not to be average. Even in the face of it being difficult sometimes, I choose to live an uncommon life, because why the hell not? Why the hell not, sisters?

Theresa: Oh, my God. Sounds great. So, it's so true, because we're given one life. And as someone... I'm reading this book, Professional Badass. Professional Troublemaker, I'm sorry. Professional Troublemaker. And she says in there so many people are walking around with their lights off. They're walking around with their lights off. Don't even... They're just almost like robots. So, there's very few people that actually turn their lights on and really start asking themselves, what is it that you want, or what is it that I want, and then really choose to follow it. So-

Mary: Totally true. I call it a floating head, right? It's the floating head of to do. So, it's like you've got this long ass list, and the problem is half those things on that list are for somebody else, it's not for you. And you said yes to those things. You gave a big ass, resentful yes to them, and you're doing those, and now you're mad about it, now you're tired, and now you have your crazy busy badge of honor on your left shoulder. Everybody take your right hand and pull that damn badge off. And you just become that floating head. And before you know it, just freaking... Before you know it, your kid is 15, and she's going to move out one day, right? Or before you know it, legit this happened just literally the other day, my husband was taking a walk and he's like, "I ran into such and such." And I was like, "Oh, okay." And that guy is younger than us. And he has a catastrophic diagnosis. And it's just like, oh.

So, wherever you are in your life, you're going to have these moments where it's the wake up call, right? And I wrote some poem. It's on my website. I'll have to find it for you. But it's called Wake Up. And it really is. I'm very direct with people, because I do, I want to shock you, I want to slap you out of your slumber, and I want you to stop being that floating head, and get really connected with what you want. Because when you're on autopilot, years are going to go by, and that's personally my hell on earth, thinking I've wasted time. Oh, my God, that could make me just freak out and get into a meltdown panic attack thinking about times in my life that I've wasted. Now, I try to, and I'm pretty successful at flipping things around and being like, well, thank God also that happened.

I was just thinking about this the other day. Thank God I didn't have a kid with my ex-husband, because I wouldn't be here right now talking to you, Theresa, being in this

beautiful home, happily married to John, with a beautiful daughter, River. Because something would have been different, right? But during that marriage, I was like, why aren't we having a baby? Blah, blah, blah. But thank God that didn't happen. So, you've got to be the kind of person, I believe, who seeks out the lesson, the benefit, the reason. Find it. That is, I think, part of the catalyst for you evolving.

Theresa: No, absolutely, absolutely. And speaking of evolving, how did you go from getting a degree in interior design to become... So, then becoming a psychotherapist, then I think you did sales at some point. How did you end up... What made you switch from interior design to go and become a psychotherapist, and also work at Johns Hopkins, but also work with clinicians now? What was that path?

Mary: So, I've been an entrepreneur since I was a kid. I moved out before I graduated high school, because it was crappy, living at home. And I always wanted to see what I was made of. And there was all these starts and stops, starts and stops, because you have to recondition your thinking, right? Because I wasn't... I didn't grow up with that, go be a millionaire, go make trillions of dollars, go have a global consulting company. That was not my role model. But here's the thing. What I know about my zone of genius is I am the kind of person that can take in reams of information and distill it, excuse me, to the quickest path to the goal, the quickest path to success. I am masterful, and brilliant, and you see, I'm doing what I call a beneficial brag, right? I'm sharing and I'm claiming what I'm good at. All you women out there, start doing that, for God's sake. But anyhow, what I'm really great at is-

Theresa: That's a big thing. Women don't do that. And we'll get-

Mary: Oh, my God, that's why I call it beneficial bragging. Once I really allowed myself to say, what the hell am I really good at? And what I'm incredible at is, like I said, taking in huge amounts of information. And I never feel flooded. I never feel overwhelmed with that with clients. But that's a way my brain works. So, whether or not it was doing interior design, right? Here's \$100,000 budget back in the day, which is nothing now, but \$100,000 budget to redo a house, to... And it's just being able to plan an entire 5,000 square foot home, or taking in people's ideas, and synthesizing it into a very strategic concrete method for accomplishing the goal. So, whether it was interior design, whether it's when I was a behavioral trainer for 25 nursing homes all across Baltimore, and being able to keep up with dozens, hundreds of clients and patients, that's just a skillset that I have.

So, back to the interior design, why I stopped doing that, that was in the '90s. And we hit a recession. And people were like... And I started volunteering. I started volunteering with Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. And I just got to the point with all the volunteering that I was tired of working with people who were like, "I don't know if I want to have a polka dot or a stripe in my third spare bathroom." It just didn't seem that important to me anymore after being in Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. And by the way, I was not a mother at that time, but it was really close to my heart, alcoholism. And so, that was why. So, I went back to school. I got to BSW. By the way, my BSW, in case you didn't

know this, was from an all black college, Morgan State University. Yeah, so it is. It's funny even raveling through these things.

And then I have a master's degree in social work, and then became a clinician. So, now, meanwhile, when all this was happening, I'm still an entrepreneur. I did have an interior design business at one time. And then I got involved in some direct marketing and selling. And then ultimately... And I had a private practice. But ultimately, wanted to rely on myself. And I wanted to be an example to my daughter, River, and to all women, and this is who I am now, and this is the mission of my business, is to be the example of what's possible, and to push you into being sovereign, being financially sovereign, being by financially free as a woman, being emotionally stable, and frankly having all the time to do whatever the hell you want to do. Because we are in a grind society, and I refuse to do that. So, I'm very big on, with my consulting clients, helping them get to a three day workweek, and still making great money, whatever that looks like for them, right? I have eight figure clients, and I have clients who are at 100 grand.

It's more about the thinking and the method for creating the life that you really want. So, ultimately... And I'm on the next evolution of my own business and my own life. And it takes time to think about it, but as soon as... I'm the kind of person as soon as I make a decision, and I'm solid, boom, I'm done. So, I launched my podcast, all the things.

Theresa: Right, right. Wow. Oh, my gosh, I was going to ask you, you're also a Girl Scout leader.

Mary: I was a Girl Scout leader. Oh, my god. So, the other thing, it was just-

Theresa: We're talking about all these things that you've done, I'm like, wait a minute, you didn't talk about you were a Girl Scout leader.

Mary: I was the homeroom mom for River's classes until middle school when you couldn't do it anymore, from pre-K. And then I was like, I started with as a Daisy mom, and then we went to Brownies, and then we went to Girl Scouts. And I didn't have that kind of... I didn't grow up like that. So, I am one of these people who are like, I'm going to give my kid everything I didn't have in life. And my mom was not a hands-on mom. She was far from that. She was the complete opposite of a hands-on mom. And I wanted that for River, but also for myself. And transparently, I wanted to have that as an experience and see life through the eyes of a child who was being raised in a healthy, non-dysfunctional, a very healthy environment. And that was really important to me.

But here's the thing. I probably was a terrible Girl Scout mom on many levels, because my kid has a lot of energy, and I was like, "Can't you just help me out? It's... Dah, dah, dah, dah, dah." And then those damn Girl Scout, those other moms, okay, look, this is what literally happened one day. So, this one mom was supposed to run the meeting. Thank God, I didn't leave, just leave the kids there at the school, and then we moved to a church, because she didn't show up. She went and got her hair done. And I was like, thank you very much for proving that I'm the better mom. So, sometimes we need those moments, right? What do we all need as moms to prove that we're the better mom? The better mom than you were, right? So, that's so funny. Can you believe that? To this

day, to this day, if I ever run into that mom, I'd say it to her. I'm like, "Remember that time in Girl Scouts when you didn't show up? I don't have a problem. I don't have a problem."

Theresa: So, I want to go back to something that you had mentioned, because I find this a lot with myself, is that as women, particularly women, we almost want to hide our accomplishments. We don't want to put it out there. We don't want our accomplishments, or even... Because I know I went through this for a while, where my business was successful, but I hid it from people. I hid it. And I told... I actually would say, "Oh, well, yeah, I'm not really doing so great at this," and not highlighting those accomplishments or the fact that it was a success. Because I don't know why, but in the back of my mind, I thought I shouldn't be doing this, because that's not right if I brag about it, or if it's not... Or say I have a third degree black belt in martial arts.

Mary: I didn't know that. Oh, my God.

Theresa: But to put that out there, we hide those accomplishments. Why do you think? Because I know that's one of the things that you do, that bold, the brave, outgoing leader deciding to have more. I know that you do that with women, because you've done it with me, is getting people to say and have that conviction. Why do you think women do that?

Mary: Well, it's obvious. The real reason is... And thank you for sharing that. I didn't know that. And it's funny. We'll have to have another conversation, because I'm like, I want to take a self defense class. But side note, side note, right? And I was wanting the Girl Scouts to do that, but that's a funny connection story. Anyhow, so-

Theresa: And I taught Girl Scouts self-defense after 9/11. We have that in common.

Mary: Oh, my God. Okay, we'll have to have another... We'll have around two of those.

Theresa: Side note, side note.

Mary: Right. The obvious reason is that women are indoctrinated to be subservient in our culture, right? That's the truth. And so, I believe there's five blind spots, and I teach, I work with clients around this. And here they are. One is fear of judgment. That's the number one, right? Our fear of judgment, our number one blind spot. And sometimes it's not so blind. And judging ourselves for speaking up, judging ourselves for wanting more. And then of course, worrying about Sally Sue, trolls on the internet, or whomever, or our freaking sister who's going to say, "Oh, my God, look at you. You need... Look at you having a podcast. Who's going to listen to that?" We fear that. And again, it goes back to our biology on one level. One is our brain is designed to keep us safe.

So, if we quote, quote, brag, there's a difference between what I was sharing about a beneficial brag and even what you just shared. There's one thing about being that, and there's another thing about being [inaudible]. When I'm talking to women about sharing their wealth of accomplishments, it's because, one, I'm a believer, we need to do this with each other as women. I want to hear the good stuff. I'm available for the bad stuff

too, but I want to hear the good stuff. I think that the more we share about our accomplishments, the more women will have accomplishments. I'm a huge believer in that. And if you have a business and you're listening, how in the heck is your client going to really help make that decision if they don't know what the hell you can even do to help them?

Let's be in reality. My master's degree is an administrative and planning, is an advanced one year degree. I was the only fellow in my college. All these things. These are small things that you can just weave in your authority. This is about authority building. And most women don't want to hold on to the authority. Now, that's a whole nother thing. It's because they don't want responsibility. They've been told don't be bossy, don't be bitchy. Don't raise your hand. Be quiet. Be a nice girl. And it's all of these things. This is why in Lead a Life Uncommon, the program, it's about writing your own rules. Because right now, I bet you, you're living so much of someone else's rules. And I talk to River, I'm like, break some damn rules already. And she's just not that personality. But I'm like, just break a rule, just break a rule. And occasionally, she will.

So, that's part of it. So, we don't. And we poo-poo it. I call it the poo-poo effect, right? We poo-poo our accomplishments. Oh, well, I have a very... I own two property. We poo-poo. I was able in COVID to triple my income, and I bought a house with cash. It's sitting on the river, my second home. We poo-poo our accomplishments, or we poo-poo the smallest thing. Your hair looks good. I like that dress. I really... What color lipstick is that? Oh, I got it on sale at Walmart. Which... Then I'm definitely not buying it if that's where you bought it, by the way. You know what I mean? I'm definitely not going to buy it there. But my point is stop dumbing down. Stop minimizing. Say thank you, or share. Share. And here's the thing, we're afraid of people judgments because we don't want to be exiled from the tribe. Pick a different tribe. Create your own tribe. I get asked this question a lot. It's like, if I'm successful, maybe I'm not going to have a bunch of friends. Guess what? There's a lot of us that are looking for friends.

I'm very successful. And I have... Now that I'm in this new phase of life, where with River, she's good, I am literally making friends. And literally, I reached out to three women locally, and we're going to lunch, coffee, and do some shopping. Because I want to cultivate that. Now, maybe it's not going to go anywhere, but you have to look around in your life, and you have to decide, is what I have what I want? And here's how you can answer this question. If you have this nigggle, if you have this nagging, calling, this longing, this something that's saying there's more, most women, they tamp that down. They're like, I should be really happy, because I have a big house, and I make decent money, and I have two kids, and I have a golden doodle, and dah, dah, dah, dah. And they minimize, they poo-poo their desires, their wants.

And I'm a believer that if you think about it, it's because you're supposed to do it. We can want more without attaching that desire, meaning you have a shitty life. I want more because this is how we're designed also as human beings to evolve. I don't want to be the status quo. I don't want to be average. I don't want to be common. I'm want to be uncommon. And sometimes it's lonely, okay. But I'm making a new friend tribe, right? I have this other friend that I met online. And you and I are becoming friends. But

this other friend, I'm like, "Look, what I'm really looking for is I'm looking for wealthy girlfriends who don't have little kids, who have I was like, "Hey, let's go fly to the spa this weekend, and it's five grand," they're like, "Okay." They're not like, "I don't know, let me ask my husband if he can babysit the children."" I have zero... And it's okay.

And if you're at a stage of your life where you have little kids, it's okay. It's okay for you to be having little kids and still want more. That doesn't mean you're a bad mom. So, we have to start evaluating, I believe, on not minimizing our desires, sharing our wealth of abilities, and being good with wanting more and acknowledging that that's part of being an evolved human. That was my long winded-

Theresa: Love that, love that. So, going along with this, and I know you've mentioned it, your program, Leading a Life Uncommon. Tell me, because I know listeners are probably like... They're probably listening to you going, oh, my God, how can I do this? How can I do this? So, what or how can someone get started now, starting to live a life uncommon?

Mary: Well, you have to make the decision that you're willing to be the leader of your own life. That's first. And a lot of times, women don't want that. They don't want to be the leader of their own life. And I'm here to tell you, you're already leading a life. Whether it's one you like or not, you are doing that. I can look into your life, and I can tell you what you're committed to by the results that you're having. And so, you have to make a decision, am I good with what I have, or am I not? Do I want more, or do I not? And here's the thing, the very first thing that... So, first, it's making that decision, I'm willing to be a leader in my life. I am willing to take on 100% responsibility. And most of the time, we acquiesce that responsibility to men, to our partner, to our husband, to a job, to a boss, to all these people. I want y'all to stop it. Take 100% responsibility. Because here's the bottom line. What you got right now, you've been on 100% responsible for.

Now, I get pushback all the time, no, you don't really understand, Mary, such and such happened. Life happens. And yet, how you handled it is the bottom line. So, first, you have to make that decision that you're willing to lead a life uncommon. You're willing to be a leader in your own life. And then you've got to get really serious, and be yes to that desire, and be willing to say no to all the BS in your life. And that's not easy. That is so not easy, because it goes back to what we said, be the good girl, be the nice girl. Can you please bake 200 allergen free brownies for the church social this Sunday? Even though you just wanted to sit around and read the newest novel. And you went, "Yes." And you gave a resentful yes. I want to encourage you that once you make the decision to take 100% responsibility for your desires and what you want, it becomes simple to say no to things that mean nothing. It means nothing ultimately.

A lot of times, people are like, "Well, I don't even know where to start." Yes, you do. Stop telling yourself you don't know. Stop lying to yourself that you don't know what you want. It drives me crazy. I know you can hear the inflection change, right? It drives me crazy when women are like, "I really don't know what I want." That's a lie that you're telling yourself. So, if you want to know where to start, most of us know what we want. But if you really are going to chew on your own lie, I don't know what I want, here's how



to change that. Write down everything you don't want. Because by writing down what you don't want, it's clear what you do want. Here's some examples, right? I don't want to hustle and grind 70 hour workweek. I don't want to be 20 pounds overweight. I don't want to drink wine every night. I don't want to be in this shitty relationship. Whatever your things that you don't want, those are your guideposts for what you do want.

Now, the next thing is the hard thing, right, is deciding, oh, my God, now I've got to do something about that. Because when you know that you know that you know, that's your moment. And see, most people are unwilling to do that. It's back to what we were saying about being asleep, right? Most people are unwilling to do that. Because oh, no, that means I have to actually do something. It's going to be uncomfortable. Most people don't like change. They equate that to conflict and negative emotional state. And all of that's true. All of that is true. I'm not here to lie, to deny that it's uncomfortable. But what's the worst uncomfortable? That's the question. Is it harder to stay in that bad marriage with that extra 20 pounds? Is it harder to do that, or is it harder to say, "Ah, I'm going to lose this weight. I'm going to figure out how I can be financially stable."? Which is... Both of them are uncomfortable. You get to choose which one you're willing to live in. That's the differentiator.

Theresa: I heard one time, Bo Eason, I'm in his speaking program, and he said it is harder to stay in mediocrity than it is to change for the good and to become great. So, that goes along with what you just said. And also, what I also wanted to ask, because you touched on some of this as you were speaking, what do you think is the big roadblock that holds people back, the biggest, the number one roadblock that holds them back from doing this?

Mary: I think the biggest thing is back to that fear of judgment. It's saving face, right? How many people know they should not have gotten married? But you're standing at the altar in the white dress, and there's 150 people behind you. And you have crab legs for the hors d'oeuvre and all the things. And you're not going to walk away probably. And then it's 20 years later, and you had three kids, and you've been bitchy the whole time, because you really wanted to travel the world and write a blog, or whatever it is. I think that the hardest thing is learning this skill of navigating, saying this isn't what I want. This isn't what I want. And dealing with the blowback that that comes with. And it's not easy. It's not easy. But it's worth it. It's worth it. So, this is what I want to give to you, is, what would life look like if you didn't have to worry about the blowback? What would life look like? What could you experience? How could you feel when you put your head on the pillow at night? So, that's the test for me personally. Are the things that I'm doing every day allowing me to feel proud of myself at the end of the day? And if the answer's no, then that's my roadmap for change. Does that make sense?

Theresa: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So, along in your journey, along the way, because obviously, you got here, you've made mistakes. You've had things that didn't work. So, what were the biggest lessons that you've learned along the way? And by the way, I pulled a quote. I was trying to minimize my screen and read the quote at the same time, but I pulled a quote from your LinkedIn that I thought was very interesting, and it goes along with what we're talking about. It's common when you've built something to have

a hard time taking your feels off the steering wheel. So, I thought that was... I read that, I was like, "Whoo, that's..." Before we go into maybe some of the mistakes that you've made, explain that a little.

Mary: Yeah, so that's a quote right from one of my podcasts, right? The Lead a Life Uncommon Podcast. And it really is, so often, we go through this state of life, right, where we think we just want to feel happy, right? And we want to... We're expected, we're indoctrinated, we're conditioned as women to be in this state of just the happy thing is driving the bus, right? This, everything's fine. I call it delusional denial. So, there was five blind spots. One was fear of judgment, fear of success, fear of failure, delusional denial was another, and people pleasing poison is number five. But what happens is we get into denial. So, taking our feel good off the steering wheel, that's that moment, where you have to be willing to experience the discomfort. You have to be willing to experience people treating you not great, giving you pushback, instead of living in that denial.

So, it's that delusional denial, whether we want to call it the floating head, or the crazy busy badge of honor worthiness factor, that's that moment too, where you have to let go. Let go a little bit, and get your fingers, those tight fingers that are grasping so hard to the steering wheel. Sometimes you just have to let go for a minute.

Theresa: Yeah, no, absolutely. And it's funny, because we just got back from the beach. And that is definitely something that came to my mind, is that I need to let go a little bit. I need to let go, and when you have so much stuff going on, and you're like, I get... I'm not immune from this, and I get stuck in the, oh yeah, I'll take care of that for you. Oh, yeah, I'll do this. And so, one of the things that I realized is I need to let go a little bit, and just, yeah, take-

Mary: And also, the emotions driving the bus, right? Let go of your feels on the steering wheel. We have to recognize that our emotional state is... We can... Unless we're conscious of it, consciously cultivating an emotional state, we go through a flurry of emotions through the day, right? And whether that's happiness, or feeling sad, or feeling frustrated, I'm disappointed. I'm overwhelmed, I'm overthinking, all of these kinds of things. So, we have to be intentional that we're not just allowing just our random emotions that are on the steering wheel driving it. And I think this is one of the things to practice. And most women, excuse me, most people don't. They don't practice awareness, because they are that floating head. They don't practice being intentional. They don't choose I'm a leader today, and what does that look like.

And so, some of the things that I personally do is I make sure that I start my day not in reaction mode, which means I never pick up my phone. I never. When I say never, and it's... Although I try not to be black and white in my speaking, all or nothing, all that, I can say,,, Okay, let me say I am... Now, I'm second guessing myself. Is it really never... Honestly, yes, it's never. I never roll out of bed and pick up my phone and respond to something, ever. But also just picking up my phone is in a sense acquiescing my power to something else, not myself. So, really think about, where are you giving your power away? Who is influencing your emotional state for the day? How do you get anchored in

and really solid and grounded in knowing what is possible for you, and what you're capable of?

And some of that is what you did in the beginning, is rattling off all the different things that you've ever done. Sometimes we just forget all that stuff. I like to have clients on their desk put 100 successes, big or small, and start writing them down. Most clients get to number 25, 26, 27. And they're all big, like I graduated, I don't even know, cum laude. I don't even know any of that stuff. But I graduated X, Y, Z, or I'm married 20 years, or I made \$500,000. [inaudible] cake baker? Where's the, your makeup drawer's organized? Where is that [inaudible] said no to Sally Jane, the nosy neighbor, that they can't just show up whenever they... We have to start looking at these other successes so that we can start really seeing what we're capable of.

Theresa: Yeah, no, definitely. Absolutely. So, God, there's so many insights here. I'm like-

Mary: I'm just talking. I just am like...

Theresa: That's why I said everybody grab some paper and pencils. All right, so what was... What do you think throughout your career and everything... And like I said, we all get to where we are not by just constantly having success, but we also make mistakes, and we learn lessons. And being one of those people that is willing to see the lesson and not just look at something and say, why is this happening to me? So, what were the biggest lessons or mistakes that you've made that really got you to this point?

Mary: Wow, that's such a huge question. Thank you for asking it. I've made so many mistakes. I think the biggest lesson for me around mistakes is not chewing my ass off. That, to be quite candid, has been the most challenging of all the mistakes I've made, to overcome that, and not immediately by default assign a mistake as, quote, failure. Fear of failure is one of the blind spots I was talking about that I work with clients around. And I've redefined failure for myself. I choose to have bloody knees. I choose to have some scrapes. And it's because it's also logical. Sometimes I say to people, let's remove the emotion of it right now, and let's look at the logic. The logic and the reality is part of success is on the heels of failures. You can't have... We're not born with... I can't just magically have half a million, a million dollar a year business. That just doesn't happen. There's plenty of things I've screwed up. There's plenty of... But are you choosing to be a person who says, "Oh, okay, well, that didn't work. Okay, I'm glad I know that didn't work. What's next?"

Can you be that woman? Can you choose to be the leader? And being that leader means being a woman who doesn't give herself a kick in the ass negatively. Maybe a loving kick in the ass, and like, come on, girl. Get up this morning, go work. But it's like, how do you choose to look at failure? Are you looking at it logically, that it is part of the process to success? Or are you assigning now something personal to it? You're just like, you can never do this, and nothing ever works out for you, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. There's two types of people. One is called the internal locus of control. This is a psychological thing, the internal locus of control, and then there's the external locus of control.

You need to do an assessment of yourself, all of you who are listening, am I a finger pointer, which would be the external, meaning circumstances, things outside of myself are the reason I have the life I have? Or are you the internal locus of control, meaning, are you able to look at yourself and say, "I'm the cause of the screw up."? Or I made this mistake. But not doing it from a place of bashing yourself. When are you finally going to love yourself, and be kind and compassionate? I think this is the lesson that I've really been, frankly, working on for the past several years on a next level kind of thing, where I never... Again, I'm using the word never, I never beat myself up anymore. That, the mistake, I guess, to your question about mistakes, it's like, is it a mistake that... Again, if I have to turn this around, which I do, it's like, was it a mistake years of bashing myself? I don't know. Because today I don't, and now I can lead clients, right? And now I can be an example of, it may take a while, but you can get to that point where you are your own best advocate, you really care about yourself, and that you can be gentle with your inner talk.

And I think so much of it also has to do with deep reverence. Here's what I really want to say about this, is... And I want this for everyone that's listening, and for you, and for me to continue this. Why do we not have the most, the deepest reverence for all the former iterations of ourselves that have experienced failure or experienced hardship? Why are we not giving deep reverence for that, and for the woman who succeeded that former part of ourselves? See, when we can start getting ourselves this deep loving reverence for the things we've accomplished, and the things we experienced and lived through, that is the catalyst for true success in the future. Because if you can't do that for yourself today, your tomorrow self will look back at your today and be mean as hell to her. Do you want that anymore? No, I don't anymore. So, I've done a lot of work around this. And this is the deep dive, psychological breakthrough kind of work that I love to do with clients, because I believe strongly this is the true work of our life here, is to honor all of our gifts, which include beneficial bragging about it right? And really showing up, and being willing to fail in front of people, and being like, screw it, if they don't like it, I don't... And being good with that.

Theresa: That's so, so powerful. And I think as women entrepreneurs, I think that's a big thing that holds women back. For me, my first business did not succeed. And I know I beat myself up for that for years. And there was really no... There was no reason, because that taught me what I needed to learn to get to the level that I'm at now. So, that is huge. It's hugely powerful. Well, this has been an amazing conversation. Like I said, I have been fiendishly taking notes, and I know we're going to pull out lots of amazing snippets. But before I let you go, I have a couple questions for you.

Mary: Okay.

Theresa: Really quick ones. What are you most grateful for?

Mary: That vacillates. And this is what we do every night for dinner, where we always go around the table, what are we grateful for. And you know it changes. But today, you know what I'm grateful for? Is my health, and my ability to meet women like you and have these kinds of conversations, the real deal conversation, and be willing to share

and not be guarded. This whole time, I'm just speaking truly to you and to everyone who's listening with no second guessing. So, I'm grateful for my physical health and my mental health, my emotional health.

Theresa: Well, and it's great. It's great to have conversations. I know every conversation I've had with you, you're always super honest with me. And I love that, because there are so many women out there that just, either they're so afraid to say something, because women just cut each other down so many times, that you get someone... And this was me for so long, I was afraid to use my voice, because I didn't want to be criticized. And so, it's so great to have these conversations with you. You can be completely honest with me, and I can talk to you, and it's like... And we just have that great open, honest, and fun conversation. So, I'm very grateful for that.

Mary: Me too. I love it too. And I know we can be that way with each other. And here's the thing, I think that it comes with that moment of allowing ourselves to be that, right? And being willing to take a chance on ourselves to be our real selves. And then of course, being open and vulnerable to having a real conversation with each other and other women. And I know you're the same too, right? You're yourself with other people as I am. And when you have that magic moment... See, a lot of times, women don't give that to themselves.

Theresa: No, they don't.

Mary: I'm here to say that's... If you're doing that, then you're living the common Sally Jane life. The uncommon moments of life are what we're having right now, where we're having real conversation, and we're really going there, and it's not a bunch of fluff, and we're speaking from our hearts and our souls, and we're willing to be our real selves because we've learned that our real self is so much better than the meetup pretend self that we're putting out to the world.

Theresa: No, absolutely. Oh, my gosh, totally. And being yourself and using your voice and having honest conversations, that's what's really going to make a difference in this world.

Mary: Yes, amen.

Theresa: And that's what's going to make the positive change that we need to happen in this world. So, who has been your biggest inspiration?

Mary: How do you define inspiration? It's like, who has... Let me... Probably, so if I had to say inspiration, it would definitely be my family, right? My husband's a retired lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps, and his work ethic is so phenomenal. I aspire to be like him. But I think the most influential person in my life has been my mother, because she gave me the construct of who I want to be, and from the lens of what I don't want. And it's exactly what I gave as an example earlier on, how I work with clients, you know what you want. Start with what you know you don't want. And that's how I had to... That's how I grew up. I know I don't want that. I know I don't want to be that kind of mom, and

I don't want to... So, sometimes that's the place to start. So, I think she certainly has been influential in ways that she would never even comprehend.

Theresa: Wow, that's amazing. Well, like I said, this has been a tremendous conversation. And I am so grateful that I got to interview to you today and introduce you to my audience.

Mary: Yes, thank you so much.

Theresa: And I hope that... I know you have a podcast, Lead a Life Uncommon. So, when do your episodes come out?

Mary: So, Monday is Biz Bites Monday, where you get a little business tip to start your week off right, and then Wednesday, it's all things deep dive into personal development. And so, I know you all are listening. Go over there right now. And I'm so pumped, because it did hit number 30 in entrepreneurship, which is like a big freaking deal. I about freaked out, because I was like, I was crushing some of those named people. And also, go to the show notes in that, and it's [marybicknell.com/gifts](http://marybicknell.com/gifts) with an S on the end. And it's all this stuff. So, I have a couple of gifts for people that dig into all of their thinking, because that's the real work, right? That's the fun, juicy work.

Theresa: Absolutely. And I actually downloaded one of those today.

Mary: Did you?

Theresa: That link, yeah. Where else can people find you? If they want to learn more about you, work with you, have a great conversation with you, where can they find you?

Mary: Yeah, so definitely pop over to Instagram. So, the whole thing with Lead a Life Uncommon, the podcast... Well, first listen to the podcast and grab those gifts. But I have to tell you, and this is in real time, it's like, I am starting to use Instagram. I'm a master of Facebook. But Instagram is, for the first time, this is about that growth thing we were talking about, I'm using that to really show behind the scenes. I'm a private person, so it's like, there's my Halloween decorations, or here I am hiking, or here I'm speaking on stages, or what have you. And so, I'm looking forward to having different conversations with people over on that social. And then of course, LinkedIn. I'm all over the place. I'm definitely [inaudible].

Theresa: Oh, my gosh, and you have got to follow Mary and check her out. Definitely listen to her podcast. As I said, every time we have a conversation with you, I laugh, I get so much clarity, and I get off the call and I'm like, Oh, my God, she was right. She gives you that kick in the pants that you need to do the things that you really want to do. And to really keep asking yourself, what is it that I want? Because we're only given this one beautiful life. And I lost my best friend and my business partner in February. And that was one thing that she did, and I'm continuing, I promised her I would do before she died, is to build that legacy. She built an amazing legacy. And she always wanted me to continue, and really use my voice, and that's what I'm doing. So-

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Mary: Beautiful.

Theresa: Thank you so much, Mary. Like I said, this has been an honor. And just so grateful that you were able to join me today.

Mary: Yay, Teresa. Thank you. I love our conversations.

Theresa: Wonderful. All right. Well, until next week, have a great rest of your week, everyone, and I will see you soon.

Mary: Bye now.