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Intro: Hey friends! Welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie May Wilson and I am so happy that you're here. Each week I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women.

We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life, and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends. And I cannot wait to get started.

Friends, I'm so excited about today's episode because today we're talking about how to build our dream careers while also creating work-life harmony and making sure we avoid burnout. I'm excited about this episode because a lot of us have big dreams, but we don't know how to begin or maybe we have started but we want to know how we can continue to grow or push our creativity without feeling totally burned out.

And while this may seem like an overwhelming feat, our guest is here to show you why this is possible. And it's because she's done it herself.

Our guest for today's episode is my new friend Tina Wells. Tina is a speaker, a brand builder, the author of more than 20 books, and an introspective entrepreneur recognized by Fast Company as one of the 100 most creative people in business.

For over two decades, she led Buzz Marketing Group, an agency she founded at 16 with clients like Dell, the Oprah Winfrey Network, Kroger, Apple, P&G, Johnson & Johnson, and American Eagle. She also has a whole collection of office supplies at Target, amazing, called Elevation, and a new book called *The Elevation approach*. In it she shares about how to meet your goals without sacrificing joy for productivity and progress.

During our conversation, you're gonna get to hear about the journey that led to Tina's success as an entrepreneur and the practices she has implemented to create work-life harmony and stay creative in her work. You guys are going to love her.

But before we dive in, one of the things that keeps me the most grounded and that helps me avoid burnout is counseling. If you've been considering going to therapy, but you've been wondering where to find a good counselor or how to afford it, there's a resource I want to share with you. It's one of our amazing Girls Night podcast sponsors, [Faithful Counseling](#).

Faithful Counseling is a website where you can get matched up with a Christian counselor for professional online therapy sessions. This truly is the easiest and most affordable way to find a faith-based counselor. Now, you may have heard me talk about Faithful Counseling before, but just in case you haven't, I wanted to tell you a few quick reasons why I love them so much.

First, it's really easy to get started. All you have to do is go to their website, fill out a form about yourself, what you're going through, and what you're looking for in a counselor. And within 24 hours, Faithful Counseling will connect you with a licensed, vetted, faith-based professional counselor.

The second reason I love them is that it's really easy to find the right counselor for you. In order for counseling to be truly beneficial, you have to find a counselor you connect with. And often we don't find the right person on our first try. But with Faithful Counseling, if you don't love your counselor or if you find that you're looking for something different, you can switch by clicking a button. It's easy and it's free. They really make it easy to find the best fit possible.

Then the last reason I love them so much is that it's so much easier to fit into your budget. Now, don't get me wrong, I love traditional in-person counseling, but it can cost more than \$100 per session, which just makes it a total no-go for so many of us, especially in a time when the economy is in flux. But Faithful Counseling is significantly less expensive and you guys, they have financial aid available. And if you sign up through this special link that they gave me, you can get 10% off your first month.

Friends, if therapy is something that you've been considering or something you think might be helpful for you right now, head on over to stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling. That link will also give you 10% off your first month. Again that stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling for all the info, and you can get 10% off your first month of counseling there too.

Okay, you guys ready? Let's jump into the episode with Tina.

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Stephanie: All right, friends, I'm so excited for who you get to meet today. I'm sitting here with my new friend Tina Wells. Tina, thanks so much for coming on the show.

Tina: Stephanie, thank you for having me. I'm so excited.

Stephanie: For women who haven't gotten to meet you yet, can you tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact about yourself?

Tina: Oh, sure. I am Tina Wells. I am an entrepreneur, a speaker, author, and brand builder. One fun fact about me is I have over a hundred first cousins. My mom is one of fourteen, and so I come from a massive, massive family and I am the oldest of six. So lots of family around.

Stephanie: That is wild. Do you know all of them?

Tina: I do. Well, my mom is the 12th out of 14. Also, most of my cousins are older.

Stephanie: Okay. Okay. That is amazing. Do you guys have any traditions where you all get together at the same time or...?

Tina: It was pretty much Thanksgiving most of my life. I mean, thanksgiving for me was a small Thanksgiving was 80 people, three turkeys, like two hams, and tons of things. The thing I always tried to do was like land an item on the menu. And I ended up doing it successfully. Let's say in my 20s, I started making apple pie, and that got me on the Thanksgiving list.

I mean, Thanksgiving, you know, when you have a huge family, it was like, meet everybody's new boyfriend or girlfriend and see... It was always the thing. But you knew if you were in if you got the invite to come to our family thanksgiving.

Stephanie: That's pretty epic. I love that. That's awesome. I'm really excited to get to hear your story. I know that you have a new book coming out and that you have been building or pursuing dreams for a really long time.

And I know that every woman in our community has a dream of some kind. Not all of the women in our community are entrepreneurs, but a lot of them are. Whether your dreams are more entrepreneurial or not, everyone has something where they like, "I've always wanted to do this, but I'm not totally sure how" or "I've started, I'm not sure how to grow it." And then there are absolutely women in our community who are in the thick of doing whatever it is they set out to do but they're exhausted.

So that's really kind of who we're talking to today. We're talking to... We'll say dreamers who are looking to start something, kind of builders who are in the thick of it trying to get something off the ground, and then people who are running at a dead sprint and really could use some encouragement along the way.

I want to start though by just hearing some of your story. You became an entrepreneur at a really young age, right? Walk us through the story of your journey.

Tina: First, I want to say, Stephanie, if I could bring you to my marketing meetings. I think you've just distilled like three different customer avatars in my marketing mind that I'm like, yes, yes, and yes.

Stephanie: That one, that one, that one. Isn't it funny-

Tina: That one, that one, and that one.

Stephanie: It is so much easier, I feel like, to talk about someone else's stuff than it is to talk about my own. If someone can just describe this for me, that'd be great.

Tina: Seriously?

Stephanie: Yeah.

Tina: That was quite well done. But to answer your question, I did start really young. I started as a teenager. I always like to be really honest and say, I was an accidental entrepreneur. I wanted to be a fashion writer. I didn't start out thinking I would run a business and certainly didn't think that I would launch brands at retailers. I didn't think that was my trajectory at all. I really just was really interested in fashion and wanted to pursue it.

What really happened at 15 is when I got my job at the *New Girl Times*, answering an ad in Seventeen Magazine, started writing product reviews. Would send clips of the reviews to the companies I wrote about, they would always say, "I love what you had to say. If I send you more stuff, will you keep telling me what you think?" I thought that was a gig. I didn't think there was money involved.

You know, there are all these things I learned and it was almost like my own little yellow brick road. I would just go a step and go a step and go a step and someone else would be there and say, "Did you know this? Did you know that?" Until finally I looked back and thought, "Well, I've come a long way."

But it was like these little angels that were always saying... You know, I remember the angel who called me in my dorm room and said, "Hey, you and your friends just did something that was 10 times better than what I paid for. It's called market research. Go figure it out."

And then I have the angel who was my professor at the time, who runs the business department, and I go in during office hours and say, "This person just said I should make money doing this hobby of mine." And she kind of looked at me strange and

said, "Take an independent study with me. We're gonna make it a business." So I had all these people who just helped me and helped me figure it out.

The brand and the things I do now I definitely think I'm a lot more intentional with my time and definitely intentional on the stage in my life. But early on, I think it's important for your listeners and viewers to understand I did not have this together, I didn't know what I was doing. I would have considered myself a dreamer for sure. You know, a suburban Jersey girl with really, really big dreams, but didn't totally have the tools. And I was very fortunate to get a lot of guidance, help, next steps and... I had a lot of grit to kind of get me to the next thing.

Stephanie: I love that. So tell me what turned into what turned into what. So you started by doing these product reviews. And then when you got to college, what did that turn into?

Tina: It turned into a market research business. And it was a small research business until... Let's see. Until about 2000 when CosmoGirl... This is like issue two of CosmoGirl Magazine. And they're like, "We're gonna blurb about what you're doing on this page that was called CashIn." It was like an entrepreneurship page.

And they wrote about an opportunity to be what I was calling a BuzzSpotter, like a trendspotter with me and I got 15,000 applications from teens all over the world. Again, this was like 2001. People were calling CosmoGirl magazine, it was bananas. And they were like, "You've got to figure it out." I'm like, "I don't know how I'm gonna interview 15,000 people. This is crazy. I just built my first website."

And that we got through it, and ended up onboarding 9,000 people into a research network because that eventually grew to over 30,000 people. But you know, a lot of these really cool opportunities.

And again, the women who were early on in my career are still women that are part of my career next phase now. Those relationships matter, cultivating good relationships, showing up for your relationships no matter what season you're in is so important because they matter for the next season. And I can tell you now at almost 43, there are people I met at 20 who are still really important to me, and really integral in my career right now. There's a lot of taking opportunities that led to the next thing.

You know, post-college getting a call that I was going to be in a cover story for Oh Magazine. And what happened after that. And then many years later getting the call to produce the SuperSoul100 for Oprah Winfrey Network. So I've been very fortunate to have really serendipitous, great moments in life. But as you know and your listeners and viewers know, you also have to show up for the work. It's not just

about getting the opportunity, it's about really showing up fully to deliver the very best that you can for that particular opportunity.

Stephanie: Yeah, I love that. I love how you said little angels along the way. You know, just people who were willing to take the time to answer your question, take the time to invest in you. Like you didn't have to go to your professor's office hours. A lot of people don't like...

I mean, I don't know that I went to very many professor's office hours in college, except for my journalism professors. That was the thing that I cared about enough to really, really invest in it. And because of that, I got lots of extra time with them and lots of extra opportunities. But I didn't do that for anybody else and so I didn't get anything extra in any other places.

So I like that combo. And I also like that every step was just one small step. It's just really hard to know, or maybe impossible to know how something is going to, I guess, set an endpoint that you actually end up getting to from where you're standing because so many different doors...

Like you had no idea that all of those women were going to apply. You have no way of anticipating that. So you couldn't have said, "I want to have this really gigantic market research firm with all these people that are going to show up and drop in my lap." You can't really plan ahead like that. It's just kind of step-by-step, right?

Tina: Oh, totally. I mean, if you had told me at almost 43 I'd be the author of 20 books and I'd have a product line launching at Target, literally I would have laughed in your face. Like there's no way all of those things are gonna happen. And it's step by step. I have been very fortunate.

Even now, a big part of my process, I might look and say, "Where am I going to be over the next 30 days?" But then I really try to zero in on what do I have to do today. And I have to do that because my own schedule can just overwhelm me. I'm sure every single listener and viewer feels the same our lives. We're moms, we're caretakers, we're wives, partners. You look at the entirety of what we all have to show up to do. It can be very overwhelming. And I'm like, "Just what do I have to get done today? What is the thing that's going to make the biggest change to move a lot of other things along?"

And I think really important to realize, especially at the stage when you're trying to birth something new, what do I have to let go of? That is the tough part is to say, "What is the thing that... maybe I can't do that thing if I want to do the next thing."

And becoming okay and almost making it a very, for me, a spiritual practice of letting go. So that you can say, "Okay, I'm gonna grieve this."

I had to grieve losing a business when I realized it was time to let it go. And I talk even in the book about going through a process of grief of some things. You might grieve the loss of a big idea or a dream that you have decided it should not come to fruition. But, you know, giving ourselves space for that as well.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah, I really like that. I feel like I'm a collector, which is funny because I have two-year-old twin girls. And Annie, one of my girls, is just a total collector. She always has so many things in her hands. She just walks around gathering as many things as she can hold, she's dropping things. I don't know what it is but she just wants to hold anything she can find all at the same time.

And as you're talking about that, I'm like, I'm kind of that way with projects, with relationships, with kind of phases of life. I don't want to let go of things. I want to just keep collecting. But at some point, you just can't hold on to things that you have in your arms anymore. I love that. Just kind of spiritual discipline of letting things go.

Tina: Yeah. You know, even talking about relationships, I think relationships are so integral to really nailing the elevation approach. My pastor wrote a book called *Relational Intelligence*. This is a book that really transformed my life. Because you realize that it's not just about our people, it's about exactly where they're positioned in our life.

And then what our responsibility is, meaning if you call someone a friend, that is a different level of responsibility than if you call someone an associate, or if someone is your mentor, advisor, or someone is someone you're advising. You have to know how you're showing up in that relationship.

And what I find so often is we all have probably a lot fewer friends than we want to admit we have. But when you start saying, like, "That's my friend, everyone's my friend, my friend, my friend," we forget that we then lock into a responsibility for that relationship. And we have to be really honest with ourselves as to how many relationships can we hold on to in the season we're in and honor them and really show up for our people.

There's so many different types of fulfilling relationships we can have where both parties feel very fulfilled. So just because you say someone is an associate doesn't mean that you don't have amazing relationship. You can have an associate where you have lunch and a co-worker, you're together once or twice a week. It's a great fulfilling relationship.

But if you took that on as a deeper friendship, we know the time involved. And we know it's not just a time, it's the guilt you might assign yourself for not being able to show up when that person doesn't even have that expectation of you, you know?

Stephanie: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's really good. I totally don't understand what you're talking about. You mentioned this briefly, but I want to hear... Well, actually, quite before we get into this, fast forward, tell us... As an entrepreneur, I know that we have our hands and all kinds of things. So you mentioned picking some things up, letting some things go, you know, writing a bunch of books. Like now, what is your day-to-day? Because I know that that probably changes a ton. But what kind of buckets do you have going on in your career right now?

Tina: Oh, that's a great question. I guess I'll give you the inside scoop since you asked such a good question.

Stephanie: Thank you.

Tina: Really early in the year, I really like to align with my coach, my business coach around how am I going to allocate my time. I think it's the number one thing we're all thinking through is our time allocation. And he gave me a really good exercise to say, "Well, what are your values?" And it really took me down a path of saying, "Okay, well, let me look at some people I really admire. Let me look at how they live their lives and let me look at what their values are. Let me start to ask myself."

So it took me a bit of time to get back. And I said, Okay, I think what I really like... And I referenced my pastor a lot, Darius Daniels. Just a genius, smart guy, a great person to know if you're an entrepreneur. But when I see people who are showing up and doing the things, it's like, "How can I show up and do the things?"

When you're talking about that, Stephanie, I'm like, Oh, you know what? Those are my values too. And I started to organize things around, you know, first for me, faith, and then my family and then finances and... Let's see what's next. My fitness. And then there's one that I'm like, Wow, this is a big one I need to show up for this year. And it's faculty. And it's really for me this idea of how do I continue to work on my craft.

Any of us, if you're a designer, if you're a writer, if you're a singer, it's not about producing the next thing. It's about how do I keep my skill set fresh. And I've never thought about that at any point in my career. It was just when I sat down to talk about what do I value. Do I value my creativity? I hugely value my creativity. My livelihood, the other things on my list, providing for my family, creating financial stability, all those things depend on my ability to create. Oh, goodness. It was like

an aha moment, right? I have to prioritize moments to cultivate my faculty and my creativity. And why did I not think about that before?

So if all these different things rely on my creativity, and I'm not feeding that, that's a huge blind spot and it's something I need to focus on for how I'm allocating my time. Because it's one of the most important things I'm doing, you know.

Stephanie: Yeah. What are you doing now? What are the different pieces? I guess what are kind of your roles at work right now?

Tina: I design a lot and create new products. So one of the principles of instant elevation in my book is called Get Curious. And that's really about figuring out what sparks the creativity for you, what sparks a big idea. Because a lot of times—you know, I can speak it to being a business owner—we like to solve problems. And the only way you can solve them is to observe them or to know or to be in conversation to say, "Oh, this is a problem." So first it's getting myself in that position.

Travel is big for me. Not just getting to a destination, but the experience of travel. And that whole process of seeing tons of people, seeing how they're interacting, that's a really important part of creating and sparking joy, not just joy, but creativity.

Stephanie: I do want to make sure like for different... Because I know that there are women who are getting to know you right now. So I definitely want to know how much of your time is like, you know, I'm writing new books or content creation, or creating products for me, or I'm designing products for other people, you know, I'm speaking or things like that. I'm excited for people to get to hear that, if that makes sense.

Tina: My process right now I would say I was in a place for two years where I was doing a lot of design, really almost like in a creative bubble. Now I'm in a season where I'm taking all the things I created kind of on the road and showing them to people, and it's a very different time. And I'm really trying to stay grounded, stay connected to my family, you know, because in those periods we're kind of away, it's just important to be grounded for me. But it ebbs and flows. And I think that's okay.

And what I've really been conscious of in this time is, how can I make space for me? And I think that's something we all can relate to? Like, where do I show up on my calendar? And sometimes it might mean 10 minutes for the day and I'm gonna have to be okay with that. And what do I want to do in my 10 minutes? I think we all go through those seasons where we're busier. And then seasons where we're not as busy we have more time or busy with different things.

And the key is to constantly be in a conversation with yourself around what matters now. That's what I hope the book really urges you to do is to get to know yourself, because you can't identify what work-life harmony means for you if you don't know what you value, what you want to prioritize, and what you want to bring to life.

Stephanie: Yeah, that makes sense.

[00:24:07] <music>

Sponsor: Hey guys! Our sponsor for today's episode is a company that I just love. It's HelloFresh. Now, I know that lots of y'all have heard of them. But just in case you haven't, HelloFresh is America's number one meal kit that shops, plans, and delivers your favorite step-by-step recipes and pre-measured ingredients so you can just cook, eat and enjoy.

There's nothing better than a good home-cooked meal. But as you guys know already, I'm not the best at it. Now, I've definitely become a better cook over the years. I still don't love meal planning or cooking. It's just truly not my gift. And plus these days, cutting down on shopping time is absolutely essential for us. And that's why I love HelloFresh.

First of all, with HelloFresh, there's something for everyone, with 40 recipes and over 100 seasonal and convenience items to choose from each week. I made these incredible HelloFresh chiquitos recently anyways, they were so good, I'm going to be thinking about them for ages.

And not only is the food delicious, but the process of making it is so easy. All the ingredients come pre-measured in handy labeled meal kits, so you know which ingredients go with which recipe. That means there's less waste. And I'm telling you, I am a beginner in the kitchen and even I can get these recipes. They are so simple and they kind of outlined on pictured step-by-step instruction cards. They walk you all the way through the whole thing and it actually feels like a fun cooking lesson.

I'm also a huge fan of HelloFresh because it's cheaper than grocery shopping and 25% less expensive than ordering takeout. This is great news for those of us on a budget, right? Plus HelloFresh owns Green Chef, another one of our amazing sponsors, so there are even more meal plans to choose from.

I love switching between the brands and now my listeners can enjoy both brands at a discount with me. Speaking of discounts, I love HelloFresh even more, because they want to give you a promo code for 50% off. If you go to

hellofresh.com/girlsnight50 and use the code GIRLSNIGHT50, you can get 50% off plus your first box ships free.

Again, go to hellofresh.com/girlsnight50 and use code GIRLSNIGHT50 for 50% off plus your first box ships free. HelloFresh, thank you so much for sponsoring our Girls Night. We just love having you.

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Stephanie: So going to the book, you have a new book called *The Elevation Approach*. Can you tell us a little bit more about how the book came to be and like it will help you with...?

Tina: Sure. The book came about... I was actually writing middle-grade fiction and I was having lunch with a girlfriend talking about a new book I just finished and she said, "Gosh, I wish I could do that. I have an idea. I just don't know how to get it out of my head." And I thought, "I knew a little something about bringing ideas to life." At the time..

Stephanie: Wait, I feel like you have to pause. Writing middle-grade fiction, go back to that. I don't know if women are going to know about that. And that's something that I think everyone just needs to know. So back up to that.

Tina: You know, again, an accidental thing that happened. I was full-on in my marketing career. And at the time, think again to like early 2000s, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, *Gossip Girl*, these big ideas were actually created by a youth marketing company that was similar to mine.

So someone had said to me, "Oh, you should do the same thing." And I'm like, "Oh, I'm so busy running my company, I don't have time." And then I started doing some research on a new emerging customer called a Tween and I absolutely fell in love with Tween Girls. And during a focus group, a mom approached me and said, "I feel like you would know about things like this. My daughter is 10 and she's reading *Gossip Girl*. I love that she's reading but I wish it were a little more age appropriate content. What would you do?"

I really thought about this. I'm like, Well, I agree, I love what she's reading but how do we give high value content at that life stage where it's so critical to who our girls are becoming, to be strong, to invest in the friendships and believe in themselves, like all these core values that I thought were super important and that I got from the girls I read about when I was at age.

So that's what really started me on *Mackenzie Blue*, which was my first series with HarperCollins. And then back in 2020, I formed a partnership with Target, and that was for the spin-off series called *The Zee Files*. And then since then we've done three series together. So *The Zee Files*, *Honest June*, and my latest project called *The Stitch Clique*. That one's fun. It's about a tight-knit group of friends.

I've loved writing those books. I've really loved bringing diversity to middle-grade fiction and really just... You know, there's so many people on a mission to diversify middle-grade fiction. But to have these 14 books and all of these characters and all this joy and Tween life at Target has been a lot of fun.

Stephanie: That is so cool. Okay, okay, sorry, going back to *The Elevation Approach*. How did this book come about? Tell us about it.

Tina: So kind of back to my lunch with one of my best friends. I was like, "Oh, I'm doing this new series," and she was like, "That's so cool. I have ideas, I just don't know how to get them out of my head." I'm an entrepreneur so I like to solve problems and I spend a lot of time listening and observing what's a need.

What I observed was not really a business case. I know how to help people create businesses. It's what I taught when I was running a program at Wharton called Leadership in the Business World. This was not just about how to help a friend create a business. It was more about saying, this is a woman who is a busy wife and mom. And it's not just about her bringing her big dream to life, it's about literally carving out time for herself to define what she wants that dream to be.

So I really started thinking about how would I advise this friend. And then that's what really started to build out *The Elevation Approach*. I was like, "Well, I live it." And I start sketching things. I'm like, Well, my life is kind of in these four quadrants: preparation, inspiration, recreation transformation. And actually, it's kind of a cycle. It's actually seasonal, actually live it every day.

And then I started writing more and writing more. And it was almost like writing for a friend, right? So if you think about anyone who has a book idea, it's like, get those words down and talk as if you're talking to a friend. What would you tell them? This is really an approach or method. So I made and mapped out a methodology, and then almost backtracked and realized, like, I've been living this for years, and really started to plug in what were the big aha moments.

So it could be first burnout at 27, started vacationing, but was only using that as a tool to distress, you know. Then fast forward to 12 years later, my dad gets really sick, I noticed how content he is with his life. My dad's a retired pastor. You know, I'm home in Lancaster with him and I'm like, "Dad's really content and really

happy. How do I get to where he's at? Well, I have to then let go of a few things and tinker even more."

So I will happily say, I feel like for the last two years I've lived my version of work-life harmony. But I will say collectively I think we've all started moving towards this idea. I think the pandemic was a really big reset for all of us collectively around how we want to work and how we want to live and how we want to live with our people and be with them and what we want that life to look like.

So my biggest hope is that the book really inspires people to figure out what work-life harmony means for them and to them, and to then create that path for themselves and to use these tools to help them do that.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. You know, you're sitting with your friends and she's saying, like, "How do I get this thing off the ground? How do I get started?" And I know that we're sort of summarizing here, because you had a lot more time at lunch with that friend and also it's all in the book. But when you're starting something new or you haven't even started yet, how do you get over that hump of actually moving in that direction? How do you start something?

Tina: There's a very specific reason that the very first instant elevation principle is to declutter your space. Because I feel like it's a signal to something bigger saying, I'm ready, and I'm willing to put the effort in to start, whatever it is, it's going to come.

I think you have to take the first step, make a move towards what you want. It doesn't mean that the goal or idea won't change. It likely will change. But you have got to make a step. And I feel like the step to start decluttering and making room and making space is almost an act to say I am making space for something new to come.

And then you can just do one step. I think instead of looking at four phases, 12 steps, just do one, see how that feels, and then do the next and see how that feels. And then you just keep moving forward. I believe you'll continue to move forward if it is feeling good and resonating and you're seeing results.

You will fly through this in no time and cultivate it into your life. And you'll just start living those principles all the time to a point where you're like, "I feel out of alignment. Oh, what am I doing to create joy? What are my rituals? Have I lost touch on something? Am I a lot more cluttered than I'm used to being?" All those things will start to pop up for you and you'll really start to live this?

Stephanie: That's awesome. I know that whenever we're starting something new we face all kinds of resistance and rejection. And anytime you're gonna reach for something big, we're just not going to hit it all the time. What has helped you keep going and fight that voice in your head that says "you're not cut out for this?" How do you fight back against that and then keep trying?

Tina: For me, the goal is work-life harmony. What I'm working on might change. My family, those relationships are not changing. So those are my people. But if I'm busy, not busy, super busy, crazy busy, family life takes over, those things change.

So what I think that commitment is, is really making a commitment to your work-life harmony and then giving yourself permission to change anything else that needs to change. And having those tools and having your own toolkit. Like I think every single person needs their personal emergency toolkit.

That toolkit could be, I need to have a call with my best friend, I need to be able to text with my best friend, I need to be able to have my sister's on speed dial. Whatever it is for you, you have to know the thing.

And you need to know them before a crisis. Imagine like... I had a boyfriend in college who always talked about the black box that had to be in my car. Like you want this box and you have to have... When you're in a crisis or you're in the accident it's not a time to try to source the tools. You leave them in the car so that in case of emergency, you already have your stuff, you can deal with the emergency.

I think you should think about the elevation approach that way. You're going through our process to cultivate your emergency toolkit, so when these things show up, because they will, it will not throw you out of work-life harmony. You will say, I got it, I just need to pull a tool, and I'm going to fix it and then I'm going to get back into alignment.

Stephanie: I like that idea of gathering the toolkit before you need it. Like obviously. But we don't do it. So having those things in place. I think we know sometimes what the doubt is going to be or the fear or the tendency or something. So knowing, "I'm gonna need this."

This is such a random example. But I have a couple of programs that I teach a couple times a year and that requires sharing about them in really concentrated chunks and inviting people to be part of them. And that is just such an intimidating, overwhelming thing.

Especially in the very first few years that I was, you know, sharing these and launching them out into the world, I would write myself letters like a couple weeks

before. And it was like, this is my Wednesday letter. Wednesday is when all of the doubt crashes down on me. And I'm like, "This is terrible. Why would anyone ever want this." So that's what my Wednesday letter was always for was like, "Hey, I know you're thinking this but here's what's true. Keep going. This is what I know you need to hear on Wednesday."

And I just had those throughout the week. And it was so helpful that I knew this is my tendency, this is what's going to try to kind of take me down along the way, and this is what I'm going to need. And I need to keep doing that actually. That's so good.

Tina: Yeah. And you had your toolkit and it was able to help you do all the things the toolkit, you know, should help you do. So that's so great.

Stephanie: So talk to me about growth. When we have started down a path towards doing something that we want to do, are there some threads that you have discovered along the way from all the work you've done, and all the people that you've worked with that like this is a really key component for growth, if you want to take the next step, you need to (blank)?

Tina: I would say probably be accountable. If you want to grow, who's keeping you accountable to that desire? I think first it's really understanding what that growth means for you and to you and then it's all the tools that keep you accountable.

My third principle is know your numbers. And this is not just about finances. It's about, you know, if you're committed to health, what are the key indicators that you're healthy? Do you know those? For me, one of the numbers, I mean, I wear my Oura ring every day, I check my sleep numbers every single day. I need to understand how ready I am for the day ahead and what kept me from being ready the night before. And if I see a pattern of a series of days of not getting appropriate sleep, it's like, Hey, I know, I can't go that long without the right amount of sleep or it affects everything else. So I know that's a number I have to track.

I think accountability is absolutely the most important thing if you want to grow. If you're like I'm good where I am, I just want to stay, you know, okay, there might be some other important numbers. But if you're like growth is really important, then accountability is going to be incredibly important.

Stephanie: That's so good. That's so good. I know that you were talking about the different F's and you said faculty. So like growing your skills and maintaining your skills. And you mentioned creativity. What have you been doing to... Like give us some ideas of how we can really invest in our own creativity.

Tina: First, I think is going back to asking yourself why. Are you creative for yourself? Are you creative for your job? You know, what is it about? If I'm being creative just for me as Tina, that's probably more in fashion and style. You know, cooking even is something I will do very personally for me.

If it's professionally, then it's how am I sourcing colors and fabrics? How am I designing new patterns? I need to travel, what are the places I need to travel to? What places are really inspiring me? What colors are really inspiring me?

That's very different motivation than "I'm gonna go to a cooking class because I want to learn something new and I want to learn how to make a new sauce or something." If I'm trying to get inspired to make a really interesting meal, I might go to like a William Sonoma and just see who has a new cookbook or what's the new recipe or open a magazine and see what the recipe of the week is.

So there are different versions of inspiration or, you know, things that spark creativity for me based on why. So I think you first have to answer the question: why? And then you can start to build your toolkit there.

Stephanie: Okay, okay. That's really great. I'm such a traveler. I could travel constantly and be so happy. What does it look like for you? To travel for inspiration? What do you do while you're there? I know what... You know, like a work trip, a lot of times you don't leave the conference center. Or a vacation, sometimes you just go, you know, there's like the flying flop. So you just go and you lay on a beach chair. What does that look like or what are some of the things that you've done on different trips to kind of stock the pond of your creativity?

Tina: So before I go, I'm a big researcher. I love to read blogs of interesting people. A lot of times I get my travel references or inspiration from articles I've read about people where I'm like, "Oh, that's a really creative person. Where did they go?" And then before I go, I have a list of places I want to go, I have a list of stores I want to visit, a list of not just a typical tourist thing to do. I'm more of like, Oh, are there stores where here are female-founded brands?

A lot of times when I'm doing work travel and it's places I haven't been before, I'll actually ask the organizer, Can you take me to a female founder collective or a place where I can meet female makers and buy goods from them? I was in, I think it was Jamaica speaking at a conference, and we had a really fun girls night.

And there were a bunch of women who were fashion designers, they were beauty founders. They came together, I gave them some advice and then we had a shopping event. So it was super fun but it was because I asked, I said, "Hey, I'm

coming in, I'm gonna do a little bit of shopping. I don't have a ton of time, but I want to support other female founded brands. Can you help?"

Now, I would say don't just go to the restaurant on the resort. Obviously, be safe and whatever you're doing. But find those little gems. because as you're walking into the hidden gem restaurant is the inspiration wall that you take a photo of right there, those are the moments you're looking for. Or you're going to that super interesting store that the locals go to where you get a little bit more inspiration.

So I'd just say challenge yourself beyond what a tourist or what people would want a tourist to do in a certain place. I often find that I need to do that. Right? I'm like, "Okay, I want to do something a little bit different here." But I do a lot of pre-work before I end up on a trip.

Stephanie: That's really cool. That's so awesome. We've kind of talked about this, talked around this idea of work-life harmony. I guess I want to know what that looks like for you right now. Like what are some of the ways that you know you're out of harmony or some of the things that you're really shooting for? And then maybe what is that looked like for you in a different season of life? Because I know it's always changing, right?

Tina: Yeah, it definitely changes. I mean, I think it's a feeling. I think it's really hard to say to someone else, This is what it feels like to be out of alignment. The reason I say that... So imagine you're cooking your favorite dish and there's no recipe. Only you know the right ingredients but you know instantly when something is not right that you've added to the mix, right? You're like, "Oh, that's not the flavor I want."

Your work-life harmony is that personal. Sometimes you may not know exactly what it is, I mean, the reason there are 12 principles of instant elevation is because I really hope that helps you identify, Oh, I'm not doing something to create joy, or I'm not letting go of things. It can help you get to understanding.

So what I will say is, it starts with the feeling that something just feels off. And don't ignore a feeling that something just feels off. Really dig into why does it feel that way and how can I... You know, what do I need to do about it?

But if you can't get quiet and get still to see that something is off, how do you then diagnose that and get to a solution. So the biggest thing you have to do is create opportunities for check-ins with yourself so that you can get clear on what needs to be fixed.

And I think to answer your question, in other seasons, I would have never quieted enough to be able to actually say something's off. I would have been just going,

going, going, hustling, hustling, hustling, and not ever been able to pay attention to the fact that something's really off.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. Well, okay, I've one more question and then I just want to see if you have any last encouragement for women who are like your friends that you have lunch with that day. What is something that you have made, and what is something that you have done, so two different things that you are super duper proud of?

And I want to pause. I love asking this question because I think that we're so often taught to not brag. You know, something great will happen and it's like I text my mom because it just feels weird to talk about those things. But it's so fun to get to hear what other people are proud of. So let's start with make. What is something that you have made or designed or written that you were just super duper proud of?

Tina: Oh, goodness, I feel like my answer is going to be the same in this season. I've made a product line that's a Target, a home office line. So I'm super proud of that entire line. You know, 18 different products that I really hope bring work-life harmony to your home. I get to use them every day. I have been for a while. And obviously the book that's coming with the brand, I think the two of them together is great and feels great.

And the thing I've done, I think, that I'm most proud of, is really living the elevation approach and getting myself out of a place where I was successful... You know, I was in a place where on the outside things look really great. So I think for anyone who's listening, or watching this, there are times in life when other people think we're thriving, and we know we're not. I think I'm most proud of getting myself out of a place where I wasn't thriving and getting myself into a place where I was on my own terms really defined by what work-life harmony meant for me and not really defined by others' expectations for me or how I should show up. And that was really hard.

It's not hard when something is failing and you walk away from it. It's really hard when something is thriving, but you feel like you are not thriving. So I had a career, and a name and an industry and all those things were going well. So to outside world, there was zero reason for me to pivot. I just realized I wanted something new and different. So I'm proud of it, because it was really hard to walk away.

Also, again, to your listeners and viewers alike, they might relate to the guilt of it, to the guilt of choosing to not continue something where you're doing really well or feeling like you're letting other people down who had an expectation of where your career should go in that season. I think it's the best thing I ever did to not live up to those expectations. Because we all only individually live our own lives. We follow

friends and we want to be inspired, but only you know what it's like to struggle with what you're dealing with. And you've got to reset that for yourself.

And what I found is when I did it it made being around me better for a lot of other people and it really brought a lot of joy back to relationships and so really proud of having done that.

Stephanie: That's so awesome. That's so awesome. Tina, thank you so much for being on the show. I'm so glad that we got to connect.

Tina: Thank you so much, Stephanie. This is great.

[00:49:31] <music>

Outro: Friends, isn't Tina amazing? I just love her and I love this conversation and I am so happy I got to share it with you.

One thing I wanted to mention quickly is I know we talked about a lot in today's episode. And so if you want to find the links to any of those things, all you have to do is go to my website. It's girlsnightpodcast.com And for every episode, we'll have a blog post with the show notes. All the links will be there for everything we talked about, including all of Tina's contact info so that you can follow her and so that y'all can be friends.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that if you haven't had a chance yet, it would mean so much to me if you would take just a second to leave us a rating and a review on iTunes. We've gotten so many amazing five-star reviews from y'all and you've left the sweetest comments. I can't tell you how much it means to me. And it also helps out the podcast more than you can imagine. So if you haven't yet, please take just one quick second to leave us a rating and a review.

Thanks so much. All right, friends, that's all we have for today but we'll be back next week for another episode of Girls Night. And you're going to love this next one. I'll see you then.