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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.

I'm so excited about today's episode because today we're talking about how to know when it's time to quit your job and how to find a better one. We're excited about this episode because I know that while some of us have jobs we love, that's just not the case for all of us.

And if you do have a job you don't necessarily love or that you totally hate, what do you do? Should you leave or should you stick it out a little bit longer? How do you decide? And even if you're sure you want to leave, there's always this fear that you won't be able to find something better. Ah, so how do we figure this out? How do we know when it's time to leave our job and what do we need to do to find something better?

Today's guest is going to help us answer these questions and so many more. Our guest for today's episode is Ashley Stahl. Ashley is a career expert, a podcast host, and an international bestselling author and she has so much wisdom to offer on this topic. Friends, I can't wait for you to hear from her.

But before we dive in, one of my favorite resources for when I'm trying to make a big life decision is counseling. Friends, if you have been considering going to counseling but wondering where to find a good counselor or how to afford it, there's a resource I wanted to make sure to share with you. It's one of our amazing Girls Night podcast sponsors and it's Faithful Counseling.

Faithful Counseling is a website where you can get matched up with a Christian counselor for professional online therapy sessions. This is truly 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 four quick reasons why I love them so much.

The first is that it's 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.

Second reason I love them is that it's really easy to schedule your appointments. Once you're connected to a therapist, you can start communicating with them in less than 24 hours. You can also log into your account at any time and send a message to your therapist and you'll get timely and thoughtful responses back.

You can also schedule weekly video or phone sessions. And the best part is you can do it all virtually. No commute, no awkward waiting room time, less time away from work, you can even do your sessions in your PJs, which I do every single time.

The third reason I love them is that it's easy to find the right counselor for you. In order for counseling to be truly beneficial, you have to find a counselor you really connect with. And oftentimes we don't find the right person on our first try. So then we're stuck going through the whole process of breaking up with our counselor, which is awkward, and then starting from scratch to find a new one.

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 is easy and it's free. They really make it easy to find the best fit possible.

And then the last reason I love them so much is that it's so much easier to fit into your budget. While I love traditional in-person counseling, 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 they have financial aid available. And if you sign up through this special link they gave me, you can get 10% off your first month.

Friends if therapy is something you've been considering or something you think might be helpful for you right now, head on over to stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling. And that link will also give you 10% off your first month. Again, that's 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 Ashley.

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Stephanie: All right, friends, I am so excited for who you get to meet today. I'm sitting here with my new friend Ashley Stahl. She is someone that I have been wanting to have on the show for a really long time. So Ashley, welcome officially to Girls Night.

Ashley: Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited.

Stephanie: So for women who haven't gotten to meet you, I would love to know who you are, what you do, and a fun fact about you. And that can be truly anything.

Ashley: Okay.

Stephanie: Sky's the limit.

Ashley: Okay, love a good sky's the limit. I'm a career expert, I'm an author, and I'm a podcast host too, which I have to have you on mine, The You Turn podcast. I guess a fun fact is also a career fact. I used to work in counterterrorism and national security and I'm bilingual in French. But my favorite fun fact is that I love cupcakes and I'm a connoisseur of cupcakes in multiple cities. Like I can tell you where to get the best cupcake.

Stephanie: The combination of those things is so amazing. It's so amazing. I worked in counterterrorism, I worked in national security and I am a connoisseur of cupcakes. That is everything.

Ashley: Girl, let me tell you.

Stephanie: Who did you work for? Is that a question I can ask? I don't know.

Ashley: Yeah, please.

Stephanie: I don't know the protocol.

Ashley: I know. Stephanie, if I tell you-

Stephanie: I know. I know. You guys will know.

Ashley: I was working for the Department of Defense. So I was at the Pentagon for a couple of years. I left there and I did private intelligence work for a lot of fortune 500 companies through a consulting firm later. But my responsibilities at the Pentagon were around Afghanistan and helping NATO withdrawal which we all kind of saw the past couple years didn't go so well. But this was like 12 years ago that I was at the Pentagon. It's been a really long time.

Stephanie: That is wild.

Ashley: It's wild.

Stephanie: That is-

Ashley: It's so random. I'm a random little package, you know? I feel like a little tropical bird in the snow or something sometimes. It's like, "What am I doing?"

Stephanie: It's so cool. Everything about that is so cool. Do you know where to get the best cupcakes in Nashville by chance?

Ashley: You know what? I haven't been in Nashville in ages. So, no, but I will say I still think across multiple cities Sprinkles Cupcakes you can't fail. And I think their vanilla-sprinkle cupcake is underrated and their cinnamon twist kind of tastes like a donut. And I love donuts too. So like, why wouldn't we want a donut cupcake, you know?

Stephanie: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Okay, we're friends. That's so amazing. Ashley, tell me about You Turn really quick. Talk to me about that. Because that's the name of your podcast. It's also the name of your book, right?

Ashley: Yeah. You Turn, Y-O-U. I came up with this concept because I think a lot of people when our lives feel kind of fuzzy, we go the direction that we came from and we make a U-turn as if we're in bad traffic, and we're turning around. And we kind of aren't necessarily more connected to ourselves when we do that.

So I wanted to come up with this idea of a Y-O-U turn, where to me it's that critical moment of transformation, where you look yourself in the eye and you look at the truth, what's really true for you? And instead of muffling it, instead of ignoring it, you let it bubble up, and you face it, and you face the fact that the truth sometimes is really inconvenient.

Happiness is not for the faint of heart. It takes a lot of work to be happy sometimes, because happiness comes with saying no. And sometimes opportunities are one of the highest forms of distraction. Like we can get abundance from opportunities, but then we can get distracted by opportunities.

So this idea of making a you turn is really around coming home to yourself. And in my book, it was really about helping people with my message, which is don't do what you love, do what you are. That message is really, you know... I think we were sold as a generation to follow your passion and do what you love or whatever these three worded directives are that we heard: follow your bliss, the money will flow. I don't remember what it was.

It's wild because I love fashion but I'd be an awful fashion designer. I love cupcakes, but don't trust me baking them, you know? It's a taste buds thing, not a creation thing over here. I feel like I love film, but I would never be a film director. So I think that there's a disconnect between being a really happy consumer of something and a really talented producer of that thing.

So for me, writing *You Turn* was helping people come home to themselves and get really honest about what is my superpower, what is my zone of genius, and how do I get started today and really honoring that? So it's not just the tactical reflection exercises and tools, but also the idea of helping people really understand what their core values are.

Because I think there's two core dynamics in our work. There's the "what" and the "how". Like the WHAT is what are you doing? Like, what's the job? And the HOW is how does it look? And given that 50% of people leave their job because they don't like their boss, what we know to be true from that is that how your job looks matters just as much as what your job is. So it's not just about-

Stephanie: So like your experience of your job.

Ashley: Yeah, and your core values. Like I had a client ages ago when I was coaching privately more often. He was a really talented salesperson, he really enjoyed selling, and he enjoyed selling things he believed in. But one of his core values was integrity. And that's what made him such a good salesman, because he would sell things that he really believed in.

And when he got laid off in the middle of really hard times, he had to take a job selling something that he kind of felt out of integrity with and he couldn't perform, and he was so unhappy. And he's like, "Why am I so unhappy? I love sales." And it's like, well, your core values are being violated by this role. If one of your top values is integrity and you think you're kind of sliming people by selling this, it's not going to work.

So really looking at not just the skills and tasks that you're carrying out and title that you're under, but the values that you have and how that shows up or doesn't in the place that you are.

Stephanie: Okay. That is so interesting. I have like 47 follow-up questions.

Ashley: Let's go.

Stephanie: Kind of backing up a little bit, you know, this episode really is for women who are trying to figure out if it's time to stay and stick it out in their current position, if this

is what they're meant to be doing or if this is a good spot for them or if it's time to pick up and move on. And I think that that "should I stay or should I go" thing is so confusing and so hard.

I mean, it's kind of like a relationship. It's like you have a string of bad days or bad months and you're feeling just so over it, you are so ready to walk away. And then you have kind of a good day or something good happens and you wonder... You would just second-guess yourself a lot. So my hope just really for this episode is, for the women who are second-guessing themselves or wondering if it's time to stay or if it's time to go, I want them to have some clarity on that.

So before we get into anything else, though, people used to say that you needed to stay at a position for two years at least, otherwise you look super flaky. Is that still true?

Ashley: I think if your resume has too many short stints, you look less trustworthy. But I think if you've shown that you can stay somewhere for an anchor amount of time, whether that's... And that's all context based on how many years you've been working, right?

So if you've been working for five years in the workforce, if you have one role that was three years and then another that was two years, that's different. I think you can even afford, if you've been working 10 years, to have a six-month stint somewhere if you've shown that you can be counted on somewhere else. It's really just about the anxiety that employers have.

I mean, hiring somebody new and replacing somebody we all know it's incredibly expensive. It costs so much money when they lose a team member, not just to hire them, but to train them. Think about every hour of that HR person's salary that's going into finding and interviewing. It really costs actual money. We just don't think enough about it. So more than ever, companies want to find the right talent.

Stephanie: So they want to find the right person. They just need to know that they're not going to put all that time and money into finding you only to have you pick up and leave.

Ashley: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Stephanie: So it's not really necessarily about two years, it's more like-

Ashley: Showing that you're trustworthy.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah. So if you have a string of six-month jobs or something, then it's probably worth sticking this current one out for a while to show that you can. But if you already have that on your resume, you can afford to leave.

Ashley: It depends what you're looking for. So if you want to have one full-time job, then yes, this is the case. But right now we're in an era of so much innovation, and I absolutely love it, because we're seeing the millennial generation... I feel like that's us. In 2008 during the recession, we took multiple jobs on to keep the lights on. Like we couldn't pay our bills because we all had loans and debt and all the things.

Now probably work is much more used as a tool for self-expression. And I get really excited about that. So instead of having multiple jobs to pay your bills and piece together rent, I'm seeing Gen Z taking on a lot of jobs at once to express themselves. To say, "Okay, I'm into this niche of, you know, I want to be a film producer, so I'm gonna do this thing for this company and this thing for that one, and this thing for that one." And you're part time in all three of them and you have fixed hours, maybe you don't, maybe you're 1099 Whatever the case is, it allows people to get to know themselves better.

And I think that's my biggest message in my book as well is that life is an experiment. I think people get so stuck on, am I making the right choice? Am I choosing the right thing? But I think the deeper question is, is there such a thing as the right thing?

Like, especially because you talk a lot to your listeners about their relationship with God, it's like, are we ever really alone? Is there ever such a thing as a misstep? I do think we learn. But a lot of people, I think, we get into analysis paralysis, and it's so powerless for them. It's like, I think that yes, we don't want to be irresponsible and turn our resume into this graveyard of trial and error. We don't want to do that. It's not a vibe. But I think there's a lot of benefit to looking at your life through this lens.

My master's in spiritual psychology. They talked a lot about how we're souls having human experience. I think if this is just an experience and we're just here, why hold it so heavily? I also think about dating. I dated so many guys when I moved to New York City and before I committed to one, and it felt like every single one was a different universe.

And none were better or worse than the other, it was just different planets. And I was like, Wow, this guy's an art collector and his planet involves traveling to pick up pieces of art and talking to artists and going to art shows. And it's not just career-related, right? It's their energy too. This person is a screenplay writer and his universe is this. And I just found there is no wrong universe.

So you're going to step into different universes in different career paths. But as long as you're moving forward. I heard Reese Witherspoon say the other day, you know, sometimes you're on the back of the bus, sometimes you're on the front of the bus, stay on the bus. That's my take.

Stephanie: I love that so much. I love the taking the pressure off of it. I think you're right. I think we really grew up in a time and graduated from high school or college at a time where it was like, What are you going to do with your life? That was the question that we were asked.

As you're going into high school, the question is, like, where are you going to go to college? And as you are stepping into college, you don't even know where your dorm room is and people want to know what your major is. And then you figure out what your major is and you've found your first class, and then people want to know what you're gonna do after you graduate.

And it's just a lot of pressure to find the one right thing. The idea that there doesn't have to be one right thing, but that we can try on different things and see what feels like it fits. And different things are gonna fit in different seasons of life, too. I love the freedom in that.

And I love the freedom in like you don't have to have one full-time job. That has really changed. I know family members of mine, you know, have had the same job for, you know, 40 years and then retired and that was their career at the same place. And that's just not how most of us do things these days. So you don't have to find that exact one right thing.

Ashley: 100%. And I think your purpose moves. Like for the new mother, her purpose is being a mother right now. Your career might not ever give you that kind of purpose. Right? I mean, yes, we spend 90,000 hours of our waking time on this planet at work. That's two-thirds of our time awake. It makes sense that we want it to count for something if you're in the workforce.

So it makes sense to seek some sort of meaning in what we're doing. But I think remembering that in life we're just transitioning all the time. I actually think your career it's almost like there's a series of three lily pads

The first one is, I think, where most people hang out, which is—and I say that with no judgment—is like this is fine. Some people who say they're fine, they're not in touch with their pain. Other people, they're fine. And it's fine to be fine. I feel like there needs to be a movement around that because in personal development it's like, why are you just fine? Be amazing. And it's like, you know what, if you feel fine,

it's okay for things just to be fine. So some people hang out there and it works for them, some people are in pain over there, it just depends.

I like to get people over to the second lily pad, which is what's your gift, what's your zone of genius? Because when you get there, life becomes a game of yes or no. It's like you're in this riverbed and opportunities are coming at you. Because it's so rare to see someone who's amazing at what they're doing. And the reason we don't see that is because a lot of people don't know themselves. And it's hard to know what to ask for out of life when you don't know yourself, you don't know what your self is and wants.

So once you get to know yourself, you know your zone of genius, you lock in and you're working in the right worlds. And that allows you to get noticed, and that allows you to get a lot of opportunities. You know as a businesswoman, like if on your team there's... you who's amazing at what they're doing, who's clicked in to what they're really gifted at and it stands out.

I think when you say yes or no to those opportunities and you make those decisions for yourself, you eventually have the possibility of moving over to that third lily pad, which I think is a lot more purpose, a lot more divine. So I think that for everyone, meaning is available, but does it have to always be in your job? I would say no.

I love what you said about those early years, like trying to figure out who you are. I almost feel like it's the, like, pick a major or whatever. It's kind of the equivalent of us going to preschool and our parents telling us, Your first crush, marry them, you know? That's what we're doing in our career. Like your first idea of what you want to do, build it. Spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on it in your college years or whatever it is, wherever you come from and what you spend and built it. And then it's like we have this sunken cost. So I think being experimental is so healing.

Stephanie: I love that so much.

Ashley: Permission slip, you know.

Stephanie: Seriously. Yes, I love that. I love that. So, for women who are in a job right now and they're wondering like, Is this fine? I don't know if this is the kind of find that I'm okay with just leaving fine. What are some things that we can be looking for that are... What are some good reasons I guess to-

Ashley: To go.

Stephanie: To go.

Ashley: I would say the number one question to ask yourself is what is the core skill set this job is requiring of me? In chapter two of my book, I talk about 10 core skill sets I think kind of exist in the workforce. I don't think we can blanket humans into 10 different buckets but I can say these are largely what I see. Innovation, words, service, coordination, analysis, numbers. These are all skill sets.

So really asking yourself what core skills are you using, what tasks are you carrying out. How are you using your mind, your body, your heart, your energy throughout the day? And is that the skill set that you think is your zone of genius? That's number one. Are you using and sharpening your gift?

Number two is have you exhausted growth with that gift? So do you feel like you're in a carousel where there's no more opportunity to grow or do you feel like you're really growing and this is moving forward? If you are growing and you feel like there's still room for your skill set to grow, I would be more hesitant to leave.

And of course, there's other factors. If you have an incredibly toxic boss, which a lot of people in the workplace have experienced. There's a point of no return, where it's beyond a conversation with the boss, it's beyond a conversation with HR. It is what it is. You can't get reassigned teams or bosses then you have to go. But I think if you're within the bounds of self-respect, and you're using your zone of genius, and you're growing, you really should hesitate on your decision to leave.

Stephanie: That's really good. That's really, really good. What can you tell us about the timing? You know, as we're asking ourselves these questions, I feel like we can really get stuck in the, should I stay or should I go? And it's so distracting. Being in the middle of a decision like that is really hard to think about anything else. And so I just hate for us to sit there for too long. How long should we be sitting in a place where we're like, Do I stick this out? Do I leave? Is it worth leaving?

Ashley: I think in a lot of ways life is kind of like a cocktail. Like, you put this thing together and that thing together and it's going to create its own thing. Like one plus two equals three. I think that's the case with personal relationships and I think that's the case with jobs. So sometimes it's not just about the list of qualities that that person has or the list of things that job gives you. But it's who are you in that job, who are you in that relationship, what side of you does it bring out?

So if YOU plus JOB equals sad, get to the root of it. Is it a WHAT issue or a HOW issue? Is it my skill set isn't really being used here? Is it I know my core skill set is this you know whether you read my book or not, you know, and because of that, I'm not using it here so I have to go? Can you get reassigned teams? Do you love the how? Do you love the culture? Do you feel like your values meshes with them

and you're just in the wrong job? Maybe you can move teams. So yeah, that would be a starting thought that I would have.

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Sponsor: Hey friends! Our sponsor for today's episode is a company I cannot wait to tell you about called [Jenni Kayne](#). Jenni Kayne has classic, comfortable, and California-inspired clothes from their cashmere knit sweater that everyone is obsessed with to the incredibly comfortable slippers that you'll never want to take off.

Their everyday basics and wardrobe essentials are timeless pieces that make it easy to get dressed in the morning and stay cozy throughout the entire day. They're the type of clothes that feels so good to wear, because not only are they comfortable but they're made with quality materials that last.

Now I have to say my style has changed a lot in the last few years. First of all, it needs to be comfortable. Life is just too short to wear uncomfortable clothes, right? I also don't have a ton of time to shop these days or to get ready in the morning, so I want really classic pieces that are easy to mix and match.

I'm also trying to be better about sustainability. And so that means buying less items but keeping them for longer. So I want things that aren't going to go out of style anytime soon, and that aren't going to fall apart after being washed once or twice. That's why I am truly obsessed with Jenni Kayne.

Their aesthetic is right up my alley and I'm on a mission to basically wear nothing else. I'm not there yet, but I'm on my way. I just ordered their sweater coat in that oatmeal color and I cannot wait for it to arrive. With elevated everyday basics and wardrobe essentials, getting dressed and keeping cozy is easier than ever before. When it comes to investing in a uniform that will last, my trace is Jenni Kayne.

And of course, I love them even more because they have a special gift for all my listeners. Find your forever pieces at [jennikayne.com](#). Our listeners get 15% off their first order when you use the code GIRLSNIGHT at checkout. That's 15% off your first order at [jennikayne.com](#) and use the promo code GIRLSNIGHT. Treat yourself, friends. You deserve it.

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Stephanie: I would say this when it comes to dating, that if you are in sort of a situationship or friendship that isn't turning into something, I would say you need like max six months. If you are spending consistent time with someone for six months and they

don't know that they want to be with you, jump ship. Because you've shown them all your cards. Do you have any sort of time frame for that with jobs?

Ashley: I mean, I love what you're saying was six months. I think everybody's different. And it's good to have kind of a set point personally. So for you, it's six months. I would say I'm quite similar. But there's a cycle. So I got my master's in Psych, and one of the experiments that I saw a lot of therapists using that were training us was around timelines.

And the experiment was this: Ask yourself, if you're in a situation that feels sticky, how long is too long? Is a year too long? But feel your body. I say in my TED Talk that, you know, our gut is called our second brain for a reason. It has 200 million neurons. So there's a wisdom and there's an intelligence to our stomach sinking or getting butterflies. There's a wisdom and an intelligence to our sense of feeling of constriction or expansion. So like listening to how your body responds to these things.

So if I said to you, let's say somebody who is listening right now they're in a relationship and they're not happy about whether it's a relationship with work or relationship with another person. I feel like they're just so like the two of them. But if I asked you listening, are you okay if you feel this way in a year? And the person listening was like, "Absolutely not. A year is way too long for me to be feeling this." It's like, Okay, how about in a month? What if you're still feeling this "wait a month"? Mm, I might still be willing to work on it. Okay, how about three months? Then I'm starting to kind of get tired. Okay, so four months, yeah. I don't think I can do more than four months.

So it's about asking yourself, what feels really long, what feels too fast, and starting to kind of tune into your own intuition. I also think keeping the promises you keep with yourself. So sometimes we need to go in. You know, clarity comes from engagement. It's not going to come from thought all the time. So we go in, we engage. Like, Okay, we're going to our body feels like four or five months is the thing. And after that we're going to not like ourselves anymore.

Keep that promise to yourself. Go all the way in and then check in. I mean, it's easier said than done because I think all of our mental healths are not doing as well as society as they... I mean, they've never done amazingly but right now I see a lot of pain in the mental health arena, a lot of people who are needing support. So I think if you have severe anxiety, setting a timeline, it's hard because every day feels like a year if you're having anxiety. So you also have to know your energy and your mental health and what's going to work for you.

I just saw a couple friends who co-founded a company. And it's almost like we all have different gas in our tank and amount of gas in our tank. Her co-founder, the gas just came out of the tank. She was suddenly like, "I don't even want to run this business anymore." And it was so abrupt. Because she didn't know herself. She wasn't in touch with herself when her gas tank was at 50, when her gas was at 25%. So I would say my other advice is, get a sense of where your gas tank is as well before you make that decision.

Stephanie: Yes, yes, yes to all of that. This is kind of maybe random but I just feel like I should say it. I've noticed that throughout... I don't know. I mean, it really might just be the course of a month. As women, our brains, our bodies, our hormones fluctuate, and so we could feel differently about the same thing kind of depending on when you ask us. And that's true about being tired, it's true about having a weird day. It's everything that you're saying about the gas tank.

Even this week I had to remind myself, like, we don't make big decisions when we feel this way. You know, when you're feeling down or extra insecure or you're really tired, that is not the time to make a decision. Give yourself a chance to sleep, to rest, to recuperate a little bit, and then you can make a decision from there. But I just always have to remind myself that there are some times where my brain isn't as reliable as other times or my heart isn't as reliable because I just am feeling not my best.

Ashley: That's so huge.

Stephanie: We can't make decisions from that place. We need to like nap on it and come back to it.

Ashley: And I love that you said that because I always remind myself... So I did a meditation teacher training but I don't really have an intention of being a meditation teacher. I just love meditating.

Stephanie: That's awesome.

Ashley: One of the things I learned to tell myself when I'm not in my best or in the realm anywhere near my best is don't trust your mind. And it's funny because I always tell people "trust yourself". But know when not to trust yourself. Know when you're like, Oh, my mind's really funny today, it's wild, it's going wild. Like, I don't feel right, I don't feel neat, don't trust your mind.

And going back to anxious people, because I think there's so many right now, me having been one of them in the past, it's really hard to slow down because our anxiety is going to want an answer now. But really understand that that's self-love.

Like being able to self-soothe and slow down and make decisions from an integrated place, a calm place, I think you're at your most powerful state when you're calm.

I've gone into corporations and helped leaders make decisions. To me, if they're not calm and they're not grounded, it's like, okay, we can't even talk about this issue until we get your energy, right, because you're not in a good state. So yeah, being able to self-soothe and not trust the mind when you can't is so important.

Stephanie: That's so cool. That's so good. As we're thinking about leaving, I think that there are two main fears that come up. And one would be, what if there's not something else out there? You know, we start to really doubt ourselves or we doubt that we'll be able to find something better. I mean, honestly, that's true of relationships too. You're right. There's so many crossovers.

Ashley: So many parallels. Yeah.

Stephanie: Are there other physicians out there? Is there something else out there for us?

Ashley: I think that's so important that people remember. People are always hiring. There's always needs. Even times of extraordinary economic downturn are also times simultaneously of extraordinary innovation and rises of new concepts. So I think it's so important to stay in that mindset.

Is it going to be more competitive? I think that's a real thing. In my business, we sold courses that I had created 10 years ago and ads were so much more affordable. I remember people saying to me, You know, you created this once, you can create it again, this kind of success, Ashley.

And I remember thinking, Well, the market sometimes can get more crowded and competitive. That's a very real thing. And I think sometimes in personal development we'll say, "Don't be in scarcity." But it's a very real thing that competition exists.

But I also think that being able to stand out is a learnable skill and it's a heck of a lot easier when you're doing what you're meant to do. When I say "meant," I don't mean like your higher calling, I mean your zone of genius. So when you're in your zone of genius, people will notice you, people will recommend you, life gets easier. I think that's why so many people are burnt out, they're just walking on a path that's not theirs for so long. And it's exhausting to be someone else.

Stephanie: There's so much in that. I think the quick answer is we just need to read your book. Kind of summarize it if you can for us, how do we figure out what our zone of

genius is? Because I think that so many people are sitting here going, "Ah." And also the fear is, "What if I don't have a zone of genius?"

Ashley: Okay. So when I started my business as a career coach like 12 years, 13 years, whatever ago, I remember kind of cringing when people would do the kind of advertising that they would say, "Everybody has that special something." And I remember thinking, "Maybe some of us are duds," which is the saddest thought. But I just thought-

Stephanie: But totally relatable of that.

Ashley: Right. Maybe not everybody has a special something for this world that we're living in. I've learned that people do. And it's important to know what that thing is. And I think the way you know... just through reflecting with yourself is one way.

But another way externally is you can create a Joy Journal. I talked about that in my TED Talk. It's this idea of every day for 30 days, write what lit you up in your day. There's a time when I was at the Pentagon and I worked so hard to get into counterterrorism. I really wanted to be a spy because my people skills I thought I could use them to really help the world in some way.

But when I was there, I was so sad to admit that the joy thing in my journal was my coffee break because I really liked the barista next door. And I had to really look at that. And after 30 days, you'll see a pattern... You don't want to try and write the same exact thing every day. But you'll see a pattern of what skill are you using when you're in that joy? What is it about that? So that's one thing.

I have the 10 skills in my book. Even if you don't read the book, I think asking people around you, "when have you seen me at my best?" is a really powerful question. I had a guy on my podcast ages ago named Dan Cable, and the episode was called How to Feel More Alive In Your Job. And he would be so great for you to have, Stephanie. He was so insightful. He's a researcher, professor. And he talked about how to create a bland job and turn it into a grand job.

He had this thing called job crafting where he said, you know, there's whole body of work around taking initiative in your role in initiating projects that are high value to them and interesting to you, so that you can self-discover more through different tasks. And look, we are all very good at putting a lot more on our plates. It doesn't have to be a huge task. It can be something that's small, valuable for the team.

So I would take some time to take stock and say, what's going on in your role? And is there some sort of project that feels fun for you? What is it about that project?

And it was Dan who recommended, in that conversation, to ask people, where have you seen me at my best? Ask people that you feel like have a good sense of you.

So colleagues. If you're still in school, maybe professors or students that have watched you in some way. Dear friends, your parents. It's the weirdest thing to ask your parents where they've seen you or your caretakers at your best. You know, it's so unexpected things that they'll say. And you can even tighten it and say, Where have you seen me at my best professionally?

I love emailing or texting this and telling them you want their written response because it helps you think helps you process the information. So I think collecting that information. And yet, I think a lot of information it's an overload for us and it takes us out of our intuition sometimes when we're so noisy, we're not listening to ourselves. So I think being really choosy on who you ask that question to is important as well.

Stephanie: What did you say earlier about...? You said it so much better than I'm going to. So I'm gonna butcher and then you can fix it.

Ashley: For sure.

Stephanie: But you said something about clarity comes from-

Ashley: Engagement.

Stephanie: Clarity comes from engagement. So there's also a piece where it's like, what if you just try it? Whatever the thing is, what if you just give it a try? and like you're saying, it doesn't have to be switching roles. It can be taking on a new task in your current role or it can be a small switch. I think you just don't know until-

Ashley: You know.

Stephanie: ...until you try something.

Ashley: And that's what's really important. When I was talking about those three lily pads, the one where you're fine, the one where you know your gift, and the one that you're really feeling on purpose, you're kind of swimming in between those. And I think those seasons are really important. Like there's some years that I'm asking questions, and there's other years that are giving me answers.

So I think it's really important to know what you're in. And don't commit to the belief that it has to be a year. It can come to you anytime. But you know, I feel like we're in an era where we're getting so much advice and it's so helpful in a lot of

ways. But just remember life is the ultimate coach. You can let life give you the answer. Like be with a question.

Maybe you're going through a year where you just don't have the answer, but be experimental, be curious. When you're feeling disconnected, when you're feeling unclear, I think the first thing is kind of this idea of the You turn, which is coming home to yourself. And what does that really mean?

Well, for me, if I were to make a list of people, places, things that make me feel most myself... You know, I have a lot of girlfriends I love. There's a couple in particular where it's like coming home for me. Those are the ones that I'm like, I need to up the dial on that person.

My best friend, Nicole Nowparvar, she's a therapist. And it's like, I mean, so lucky to have a best friend that happens to be a therapist. I don't know what that means about me.

Stephanie: That's awesome.

Ashley: But it's so awesome and it's so useful. She's that person for me, where it's like, "I need to spend more time with Nic. I'm not being me right now. That's one thing. Another thing, I love hip-hop music. So I guess that's another fun fact is I took hip-hop dance classes, and I think that's from you too. I love that. It's the best. We just go to our dance classes, get our dance on, and that makes me feel like me.

I grew up in LA... and the ocean. If I wasn't sure about life, going to be by the beach just brought me back to my senses. And once you get back into you, it feels good to feel good. Like you start to more viscerally feel what a no feels like when you're back in your body. I think that's the first order of business.

Stephanie: There's a thing that we've talked about on the show before about why it is so important that we are in good relationships with ourselves, and why it's so important that we're kind to ourselves and treat ourselves the way we would want other people to treat us.

And part of it is because when we are speaking to ourselves kindly, we are more attuned to when other people are not. If we're treating ourselves the way that we deserve to be treated, it trips and alarm when other people are treating us poorly, instead of being like, Well, yeah, same old, same old, this is what I'm used to for myself, too.

I think we get to set the standard of like, No, this is how I would like to be talked to. I hold myself to that standard and I'm gonna hold you to that standard, too. So

just kind of like having everything be level so that you can notice when something's off?

Ashley: Yeah, exactly. And I think that's exactly what I'm saying. Like getting back into your body is your homeostasis, right?

Stephanie: I love that.

Ashley: That's the equilibrium. That's where you're aligned with yourself, the spirit, whatever that is for you. So I think being able to be in that soulful place. Everything that's not it is gets really easy to see it.

Stephanie: That's really cool. I think that there are some people who are afraid to move on from their jobs because they feel guilty. Is that something that you've come across?

Ashley: Like guilty, meaning they're not grateful because they don't want it? Like the believe that they're ungrateful?

Stephanie: That or you know, I'm an integral part of this team, or I'm gonna let someone down. I think that there are some people who are carrying something for a lot longer than they're supposed to or carrying it more entirely on their shoulders than it belongs or something. Have you come across that with people?

Ashley: Yeah, absolutely. I'm hearing the word over responsibility. Like people are over-responsible for other situations, places, and people. Unfortunately, I feel like there's so much femininity in me and my business when I'm writing and thinking and feeling but there's such a masculine energy to this answer that I have. Both energies are so useful to have.

But I think when it comes to feeling over-responsible, we need to remember that in times of recession, in times of challenge, the company looks at the spreadsheet and you have to go. So layoffs are layoffs, and the things are going to happen. So the company is looking for the company, and you need to look out for you. Do not give to a company what you would not give to yourself because they will not do that for you.

I think that there's also a sense of self-esteem and security for looking out for yourself, right? Like, whether you're into yoga or whatever spiritual practices you have, there's a whole body of work, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy. And one of the concepts they talk about a lot is extreme thinking, and how that can be a wound.

So if somebody's trying to get a new job and in their head, they're like, "There's nothing out there," that's extreme thinking. And we do that because of anxiety or wanting to control the situation. It's all or nothing.

So I think that's an invitation to, instead of saying, "what should I do?" it's "How can I do this? What are the options?" So if you want to leave your job, and you feel guilty because all these people are counting on you, check in with your own inner counselor, your own guide, whatever spiritual connection you have, and ask yourself what feels an integrity.

Actually, I don't know why this is coming up. But the other day, I had a friend in town, and I love spending time with her, and I'm renovating a house and these contractors needed to come. And I had to tune in with my own inner counselor of like, she wants my full presence, her flight is at 8 p.m. I really need to get to these contractors at 4. Am I a bad friend for having her go to the airport an hour earlier too? And it was like, No, I really should be with them at noon. So I'm giving her a stretching. I'm stretching for her and I'm also taking care of myself. So never abandon yourself. Turn into the options and think about what would the most kind transition look like and give yourself that.

Stephanie: All of that is so good. All of that is so good. Something that I think is really cool is that when we do this in our lives... I've found this with boundaries, too. That's something we've talked about on the show a lot is boundaries because that's major work that I've had to do. Because I have gotten myself into places where I'm taking things on more than I should or holding myself responsible for other people's emotional well-being when that's not my job.

But I lately have been spending a lot of time with someone in my life who's just awesome, is really good at listening to herself and listening to her body and responding and checking in with what she needs and then honoring that. And it's so cool because I was just thinking about her as you were talking about this. And getting to watch her do it for herself is so inspiring for me. It's like I'm sitting here going, I didn't know I could do that.

I remember years ago, I think I was going to do a podcast episode with someone and the person canceled. They said, "Listen, I have to push this. I'm so sorry. Here's what's going on." And it sounds so silly but I just didn't even realize that that was an option—that I could be sick or have something going on or need to reschedule for some reason. I just didn't know that it was an option to listen to what I needed and respond in that way. And getting to watch other people do it gave me the permission to be able to do it for myself too really.

Ashley: I think on that note, another tool from a psychology standpoint is, you know, we're all carrying around different aspects of ourselves. So there's a part of you that felt sick. There's a part of you that was afraid of rescheduling. Like we all have our own little board committee in our head at all times. So there's like the sick you that's nauseous, or whatever it is, there's the business you that needs this, there's that.

Choose whatever aspect is feeling the most painful for you or the most uncomfortable for you and talk to it. Let's say you're going through heartbreak, then heartbreak is a pretty loud aspect that you're probably navigating. Let's say you're feeling anger, rage, upset, sadness, fear. Speak from the fear, give it a voice, write it down on a piece of paper, and ask your questions as the adult version of you, and go back and forth with it and see what it tells you as you make a decision.

It's almost like one way of relying on yourself, self-sustaining through your decisions versus outsourcing your decisions all the time.

Stephanie: That's really cool. You've offered us so many different tools in this. And I like it because making big decisions is such... It just feels like it's easy to get completely lost in the maze of our brains. And it is.

Ashley: Right.

Stephanie: Because there's so much going on. There's, well, you know, my parents expect me to do this, or I always thought that I would want to do this or society holds this in higher esteem. I mean, there's just so many different things that weigh on us when we're trying to make a decision. The hard thing is that it's all invisible, like it's all happening within our brains. We can't sticky note it out.

But what you're showing us is different ways to sticky note it out, different ways to parse out, you know, this is how I feel about this. Like just give it some legs to make it a little bit more tangible and to really hear from ourselves. That's awesome.

Ashley: Yeah. And also, like you said, time. Sometimes things just need time. And you cannot replace time. There is no replacement for it.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah. I know that moving to a new position is a great time to advance. You're sort of climbing up a ladder or rungs of the ladder. It's a great time to ask for a raise, to ask for better benefits. Can you walk us through like what can we ask for, what is normal, what is...? I think most of us feel like we're bad at this.

Ashley: Well, I'm so excited right now that one of the changes we're seeing in 2023 across a lot of different states is pay transparency. You know those inventions that you look at and you're like, This is the most obvious invention and it's doing so well, and it's

like, "Why don't we all think of this? I feel like pay transparency is one of those ideas, where it's like, of course companies should be... there's a wage gap. Like why not create some transparency around roles so that this weird Enigma doesn't have to be the case anymore so much so. So I think that's one benefit that we're seeing right now.

But no matter what you're interviewing for, know this—and I think a lot of people do know this—job hopping is going to pay you more forever than getting a raise at work. Even if you get a new job offer, you can present that to work and use that as a tool to get a raise. It's not manipulative. It's just business. And believe me, HR professionals, hiring managers, they expect you to negotiate. They too have lives and they have bills to pay and they're thinking about those things every single month too. So I don't think that there's something off about wanting to pay attention to that.

The first thing I would do if you're interviewing for something new is I would research the market for that level of responsibility. So let's say you're looking for a job in entertainment. The industry you're in is interesting but it's secondary to the skill set and responsibility that you're taking on, that you're offering.

Like a coder can be a coder at Disney and the same day they can be a coder at Google or Chanel. It's the same skill set. So look at what is that range of compensation for this level of responsibility, first and foremost. Do your research. Look on Glassdoor salary bliss. There's so many different websites for this kind of a thing.

Google salaries for that sort of responsibility and job title. Get a good sense of what's the high, what's the low, then look at your industry. I feel like it's a two-part process. Just look at the responsibility as itself, and then the industry.

And then I would chunk that range into thirds. Like this is the bottom third, you don't get to hang out there. The top third is usually for people who've maybe been in the role for a while or a top performer. Usually, you don't start in the top third, you get a raise within that top third. Like, that's the slush room.

So I like to say, go somewhere in the range of, okay, two-thirds in. So we're like the top of the middle into the top third. And if you feel bold and you feel right, you can ask for the top of your range. If you feel like you're in integrity with that, do it.

I think one of the reasons people don't get what they ask or they're afraid to ask for what they want is because they don't believe that they actually deserve it. And that does not necessarily always come from a place of worthiness or not worthy. It

comes from a tactical place of like, I'm wanting this pay, but I've never done this before and I don't have the experience to make this job graceful yet.

So they're actually investing in training you. It's a mutual relationship. So I would reflect on yourself, your experience. And sometimes experience feels like the chicken or the egg. That's kind of how I felt working in the government. Like, in order to work in counterterrorism, you need a security clearance, but you can't get a security clearance unless you work in the government. So it's like you can't get in without it but you can't... It just doesn't even make sense.

I feel like that's the case with experience. People are like, Well, I need experience to have experience, but they won't give me experience because I don't have it. It's like this weird loop. I want to remind people that you can create your experience. There's tons of nonprofits that you can offer three hours a week saying... even if you want to change careers and pivot, right?

So let's say you're in communications and you want to move into fashion design. Well, figure out what nonprofits you can offer three hours a week or something manageable. Just because you're offering something free doesn't mean it needs to be 20 hours a week, saying, "Hey, I would love to offer you my design skill set for this. It's something I'm looking to grow." That's a resume builder. So you can create your experience if you don't have it.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. Any last encouragement for women who are trying to figure out what their thing is, or trying to figure out what's next for themselves? Any last encouragement you have I would love to hear it.

Ashley: I think just to close the box with a bow of salary negotiation, I try to tell people, say what you want like you're ordering a sandwich at the grocery store. It's a fact. It's just like you want pickles and you want this type of bread. Period. It's not personal. These are the pickles you want. It's the same thing with salary.

I would say the second thing is never make it personal, meaning like if the cost of living is higher somewhere or you want to take a vacation, that's not the employer's problem. It's truly a transaction between the skills you're offering.

And then the final piece of advice I'd say as a whole is clarity comes through conversations. Like if you want to move your life forward and you're very introverted, you can do research. But I think there's something really special about conversations with people doing things out there that you find incredibly interesting.

So if your life is feeling stale or you feel like you're hitting a plateau, to me, that's an inner alarm system that says you need more information. So make that period between those lily pads at your swimming be fruitful through having conversations and getting clarity, whether that's through therapy or just talking to people that went to your same town or college or whatever it is, and work in an area you find interesting. Have more conversations.

Stephanie: So awesome. Ashley, thank you so much for being here. This is so encouraging, so inspiring. I feel like we have so many things to chew on. Thanks for leading the way in this.

Ashley: Thank you so much for having me. I just can't get over how much you look like Blake Lively this entire time. Does everybody tell you she's your doppelganger?

Stephanie: No. I've never known how to doppelganger. Everyone else has one.

Ashley: You're such a queen.

Stephanie: It is so funny. My day, my whole everything is made.

Ashley: I love that for you.

Stephanie: Day made. Can't top that. Thanks, Ashley.

Ashley: Hopefully everybody's day's made. Thanks for having me.

[00:54:53] <music>

Stephanie: You guys, isn't Ashley 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.

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. 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 Ashley'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 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. It also

helps out the podcast more than you can imagine. So if you haven't yet, please take just one second to leave us a rating and review. Thanks so much.

All right, friends. That's all we have for today but we'll be back next week with another episode of Girls Night and trust me you're going to love this next one. I'll see you then.