
Episode #8 Transcript

Answering your call to adventure. Navigating the unknown, with Suzanne Stavert.

Hey Mavericks, Pack your bags because today we are going on an adventure. Where we going? I don't know. Isn't that fun?!

If that thought sent even the tiniest wave of panic through your brain, congratulations you're normal!

Because we humans don't like the unknown. The job of our brains is to expect danger around every corner, and use our imagination to paint a picture of all the terrible things that could happen.

At the same time, we do love safe thrills, like reading books or roller coasters. Well, OK maybe not roller coasters if you're over 30, because barf, but you get the point. But we do like to experience new things in a safe environment because we can set the expectation that we are probably gonna be ok, which allows us to enjoy the thrill of the adventure.

But let's talk about true adventure and fear of the unknown. Because that's exactly what we're doing by building a business. We can't possibly know what's going to happen, and even when we trust ourselves, we are still operating against our primal nature.

That's why self-awareness and personal development and mindfulness are so essential to our ability to play the long game of entrepreneurship. Because unless we are actively recognizing and managing these tendencies, our primal brain will be the one running the show.

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My guest today is Suzanne Stavert she is the creator of a travel lifestyle blog called **Adventures of Empty Nesters**. Suzanne has become a brand ambassador and travel writer which has taken her on some of the most unique travel experiences around the world. Seriously, she's constantly moving and sometimes going from one side of the world to another to take part in these amazing adventures that most of us have never even heard of. And none of these things would've happened for her if not for her willingness to find adventure by starting a blog.

And I don't want to oversimplify, but to preface her story a little bit, Suzanne's career has primarily been motherhood. She has lived what most people would consider a lovely and even enviable life.

One of the things that is most fascinating to me is when someone realizes that they are meant to live a bigger life, and those transformational moments that make them answer that call to adventure.

Because it's really easy to stay exactly as we are. And for Suzanne, even once her kids had flown the nest, as she explains, it would have been perfectly reasonable for her to just sit back and enjoy a quieter life. Not only was that an option for her, it was the expectation by many of those around her.

And yet, she felt compelled to do something bigger. Now, I've been working with Suzanne for years so I know her story and it's not mine to tell. But I did want to make that connection because what brought her to this place of being willing to even dabble in starting a blog is a great example of entrepreneurship and actively seeking adventure when you have every reason not to.

Because blogging may seem like a simple and perhaps innocuous hobby to pick up, but it required learning an entirely new skill set, and much more than that, a mindset that is challenging for most of us and was basically considered crazy among her generation.

So it's certainly not without its challenges, but I think you'll hear the playfulness in her voice and her commitment to staying in a place of wonder and possibility because that's what she has found really fuels her to continue moving toward the unknown.

Let's dive in.

Linsi Brownson: Hello, hello, Suzanne. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Suzanne Stavert: Thank you, thank you very much.

Linsi Brownson: Tell us about Adventures of Empty Nesters, who is it for, and what you are up to!

Suzanne Stavert: Well, it's interesting. Adventures of Empty Nesters began about four years ago, really as a way for me to write about my feelings about the empty nest.

Essentially, the empty nest is when your kids grow up and move out of the house and you're kind of left thinking, "Okay, now what?" I started writing about how I felt, and then it kind of evolved into our travel. My husband was traveling a lot, so I went with him. Then all these interesting things were happening to me and I started writing about that.

The audience went from empty nesters to...actually, I have a lot of millennials following me because we do really fun things. I also have pretty good advice because I've been there, done that, you know? Now, my audience kind of goes from like 25-year-olds to 80-year-olds. We have a big, wide span of people that are enjoying the adventures that I talk about.

Linsi Brownson: One thing I think is so fun is that you started the hashtag #findadventure and that's sort of the motto that you have on the blog. "Find adventure" applies to everything.

Whether you're at home and finding local things to do, and just thinking about your life in that way. And when you travel, you go on these really amazing

adventures. So, if you don't mind, tell us about a couple of the big adventures that you've gone on in the last couple years.

Suzanne Stavert:

Oh goodness. Well, as this career has expanded, I've started working with brands. What I mean is, these are primarily travel brands because I talk about travel so often. Gosh, this year was an amazing year. I went to Japan for the first time, and I went with a company called Collette who is a company that's 100 years old, and they're based in the United States. I went on one of their tours. To be perfectly frank, it was one of the greatest adventures of my life because I got to do things I didn't even know existed because someone else was doing the planning for me, at least on this trip. They were exposing me to things I never knew were there, and I'm so excited that they were able to provide that for me.

I also...gosh, we went on a family, multi-generational trip to Italy. We went to a race called the *Palio*. The *Palio* is a very old horse race that's been around since Renaissance times. It's very basic, it's bareback riding and it's very involved with the neighborhoods of the city of Sienna, which is in Tuscany. We took my mother and her husband, our kids and their significant others, and then my husband and myself. We had three generations, and we all got along famously. We had a wonderful time. I'm very excited about hearing about other people and their families and their multi-generational trips because it's a wonderful way to really get to know your family better by spending this quality time with them.

Those were two really exciting adventures. I also went on a cruise with Viking Cruises from Berlin to Prague. I'd never been in that area of Europe before. I just fell in love with that area of the country. It was just unbelievable. Again, they did everything for me. We traveled down the river. I just can't recommend those things highly enough.

Linsi Brownson:

Yeah. It is really nice to have tours like that for places that you've never been to. It makes it so much easier.

Suzanne Stavert:

It does.

Linsi Brownson:

I'm listening, and I know some of your stories, and I follow the blog. But listening to you talk about some of these trips, it's so...it sounds poetic and beautiful, and the lucky thing for all of us is that you document it.

Suzanne Stavert:

Well, and that's the beauty of being a travel blogger is that I can bring you inside. You really get the essence of what is happening. It's not fake, it's very transparent.

You can kind of get the feel to decide, gosh, "do I want to take that type of trip", "do I really care that much about San Francisco", "do I really want to go to this area in Los Angeles?" If I've been there and I'm sharing it with you in a really honest way, it's a great way for you to decide "yeah, that's for me" or "no, not so much." I love that about what I do.

Linsi Brownson: Absolutely, yeah. You have a very unique voice and point of view as well. You're a very open-hearted, open-minded person. You're the kind of person, and I do want to talk about that specifically to starting the blog, but you're the kind of person who will jump into something and be like, "Hey, let's try that. Let's see what this really looks like."

But you're also very practical. It's a nice balance for people who are sometimes a little hesitant to jump into something if they don't know exactly what to expect.

You document it so well and you make people really comfortable with what something is going to look like, but then also, at the same time, really encouraging everybody to have their own adventure, to have their own experience. That's a fun thing to go along with you for as well.

Suzanne Stavert: Well, thank you. What I do is kind of like the wild west. Blogging...there are no two bloggers that are the same. Every person has a different approach. I began blogging with the idea that I was going to share how I was feeling about my younger children. But now, I want to really bring you inside to this whole travel world and what we can do now that our children have flown the nest, so to speak.

But the interesting thing, well, one interesting thing about me, I'm a pretty regimented person. I like schedules, I like calendars, I like knowing what I'm doing. What I do doesn't really allow me to do that. I have to be able to change that sail to go to one direction because someone's offering me an opportunity or there's some new event that I want to go see that I didn't know existed and I have to be able to just go, "Okay, let's try it." There's really no harm in trying anything.

I mean, I will tell you that if you don't try, nothing will happen. If you do try, number one, you can learn something and number two, you can be pretty proud of yourself for even trying it.

As someone in mid-life or later mid-life, I think it's wonderful to jump into something and just do it, find adventure, find that thing that gets you up in the morning. Find something that makes you happy that you're interested in. It has to be your passion, it can't be someone else's. You can't...you have to find your own. When you find your own adventure, it can be really empowering.

Linsi Brownson: One of the things that came to mind is thinking about how you got started in this world, and what sort of sparked the interest to get it going, and what that looked like along the way and how it's evolved.

You said that you like to be really regimented, and then you got into this world that is the wild west. How do you navigate that? To be comfortable in that space of unknown? Also, to know what your boundaries really are, and to know when something is not a good opportunity, what are some of the ways that you define that?

Suzanne Stavert: Well, I think intuition, I think I have a pretty good sense of things and of people. You have to kind of go with your gut, and I know that seems kind of cliché, but I do go with my gut on certain things. Of course, some things have been successful that I've tried or not successful that I've tried. Then you have to learn from that. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that. I honestly believe that we learn more from the challenges in our life than we do, perhaps, from the best things ever because you've got this life lesson that you're learning because a mistake happened or something difficult or challenging was happening to you.

As a business owner, I think you have to be open-minded. I think some people think they know everything, and I don't believe I do, and because of that, I'm open to learning from other people. If an opportunity comes my way and it sounds like something I'm interested, I'd like to try it, and then we'll see what happens. That's the way I've done what I've done, and it's opened up opportunities that I never actually dreamed could ever have possibly happened to me in just the last couple of years.

Linsi Brownson: I love it. I love too that you've had opportunities that you didn't envision, and I think that's a big place where a lot of business owners get very stuck because they think, "If I can't imagine it, I can't create it." That's not necessarily true. It's far less about the end result than it is about the actions that you're taking right now, and your willingness right now to jump in and do the next thing.

Suzanne Stavert: I think people get tripped up in money and success and they measure success by a dollar value. With what I do, I don't think that's really fair because, I mean, some things have a high dollar value that aren't really that interesting versus there might be something that has a low dollar value that is like the greatest thing you've ever done. It depends on if you value those experiences, and I clearly do really value the experiences very much.

Linsi Brownson: Yeah. I love that. It is...that's a place to come from as an entrepreneur that is so important because we don't start businesses just to make money, we start...I mean, we could have jobs and do that, and things would be so much easier if we were just-

Suzanne Stavert: Yes.

Linsi Brownson: Happy enough being paid to show up every day.

Suzanne Stavert: Right.

Linsi Brownson: But that's not what we do. We set out to create something that doesn't exist. Everybody does it slightly different, just like you said, there's no rules and nobody to tell you what will and won't work for you. You've got to figure it out for yourself. But that's true for every business. Entrepreneurs are not handed a road map when they set out. You can try, you can aim for things and absolutely you should, but that's not...it doesn't come with a manual.

Stay connected to the experience because that's really all that matters. Feeding your family matters and enjoying your life matters.

Suzanne Stavert: Right. Well, I think with...you're calling this *Maverick Monday*, and I think that's the true definition of a Maverick. I think that's what an entrepreneur is because you have to be that person that's willing to put your neck out there. I mean, it is not easy to be an entrepreneur on any level, on many levels.

I admire people who are willing to step out front and try it and see if their idea really is going to make a difference in this world. I admire people like that, I really do. I admire you. You've done the same thing that...I mean, you're in a new frontier. We're on a podcast. I mean, you never did this before, I don't think. Have you, Linsi, have you done a podcast before?

Linsi Brownson: I did for a very brief moment.

Suzanne Stavert: Okay.

Linsi Brownson: Many years ago.

Suzanne Stavert: But now, they are the hot thing, and now you're doing it because you stepped out of your box and you said, "I really want to do this." I admire that. I mean, we're very similar in this circumstance. I think it's impressive. I appreciate you letting me share all these feelings in my head because I don't really sit and ponder this all that often.

Linsi Brownson: Yeah. Well, and what you will find also is that a lot of people are having these same feelings. This is one of the core missions of having a podcast. I love these conversations because they lighten me up. But what you don't realize is that there are thousands of people out there right at this moment thinking exactly the things that you're saying, and you get a chance to speak to them. I think that's really powerful for all of us because we are also going this alone, right?

Suzanne Stavert: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Linsi Brownson: So, you don't have a business partner, you don't have a group of people that you sit in an office with every day. This is your thing, and you do it on your own. Whatever we can create for ourselves in terms of community and camaraderie, and to remember the humanness that we all share, these are those moments. This is the chance that we have to be like, "Oh, okay. Great. Someone else has had that experience or a similar experience and someone else will understand me."

It goes both ways here. The guests on this show are doing so much service for people who will hear this and have something to relate to, and also you will find that you've got your people out there. There's people out there who are really going to love your story and be so interested in what you do and you get to meet each other. That's one of my goals here is to make this conversation happen.

- Suzanne Stavert:** I love that. I love that. Thank you. No, I love being in this space and I think that social media allows us to be able to this. We can get closer to people than we were ever able to before. The fact that I could be talking to someone that could be my new friend is really exciting 'cause I don't know them yet.
- Linsi Brownson:** Yeah. Oh, that is a crazy thought, isn't it?
- Suzanne Stavert:** Mm-hmm (affirmative). I like it. I like it very much.
- Linsi Brownson:** Do you have a tip or a takeaway...parting wisdom that you'd like to share with entrepreneurs who are setting out on a path like this with no known outcome?
- Suzanne Stavert:** I would say, well, #findadventure. Jump in with both feet because now's the time to try these things that you have been thinking about. If you're a little leery about doing it, I mean, why not...tell me why you won't do it. What is keeping you from doing it? I'll tell you what, if I can do anything that I am doing now that I never knew that it was possible. The fact that I was willing to try things that I'd never done before with no one guiding me, no one taking my hand, I suggest that you too go out and do that because I promise you, it will make you feel like a million bucks.
- Linsi Brownson:** Absolutely, yeah, yeah. And you said earlier, you feel very proud of yourself, very empowered, just the fact that you show up and do this, and I think that's an important piece. It's so valuable to go out and do because you've got to prove to yourself what you're capable of.
- Suzanne Stavert:** Mm-hmm (affirmative)
- Linsi Brownson:** That's a necessary part of finding happiness and being satisfied with our work is knowing that we can really do anything that we really want to-
- Suzanne Stavert:** Yes.
- Linsi Brownson:** And to show ourselves that that's possible. I like that, you didn't say this exactly but you touched on it, like rather than trying to prove all the reasons you can't do something, prove how you can.
- Suzanne Stavert:** Mm-hmm (affirmative)-
- Linsi Brownson:** Or even flip it the other way and say, "Okay, prove to me that I can't. Let's prove to myself that this isn't possible." by the nature of doing that, you're going out and testing it out.
- Suzanne Stavert:** Now, that is very well said, Linsi. Absolutely. I concur completely. This is a very exciting time for me to be able to have a career, a second career, a third career, this time in my life, doing something that not that many people do. There are no rules, there are no rule books, there are no laws, and I'm kind of paving the way.

SPARK+VICTORY

I hope more people decide to do something like this, it doesn't have to be blogging, it just has to be something that they've been thinking about and they're passionate about and they just haven't quite gotten there, I say go for it. Let me know what you do, I'd love to hear about it.

Linsi Brownson: Awesome. Where can people go and learn about your adventures and get connected with you?

Suzanne Stavert: Well, let's see. My blog URL is adventuresofemptynesters.com. You can find me on Twitter and Instagram and I hope you do say something to me, because I'm very good about getting back to people because I love the dialogue between strangers. I really do.

Linsi Brownson: Awesome. Well, thank you so much, Suzanne, for coming and sharing a little bit of your story. We will continue to #findadventure..

Suzanne Stavert: Thank you.

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