

EPISODE 138

[INTRODUCTION}

[00:00:30]

FT: Welcome back to So Money everyone. Happy Friday, I'm your host Farnoosh Torabi. Now, in anticipation of Father's Day this year, mark your calendars - that's Sunday, June 21st - also happens to be my son's first birthday, yay! I would like to dedicate today's episode to dads and recognize that fathers these days are more emotionally and physically involved on the home front than ever before - just ask my husband. Today's guest knows this very well. His name is Josh Levs. He is the perfect guest to help us celebrate fatherhood. He is the author of the brand new book, "All In: How Our Work Culture Fails Dad's, Families, and Businesses and How We Can Fix It Together." Did you know that half of all working dads would rather stay at home if their spouses made enough money to live on? And just like moms, dads struggle with work life balance and doing it all. Now, in addition to being an author, Josh is an award-winning broadcast journalist who often writes and speaks about modern fatherhood, and spent almost a decade reporting for CNN - on air and online - and serving as the network's "truth-seeker in chief". Prior to CNN he worked as a reporter for NPR.

His many prizes include 6 Peabody awards, 2 Edward R. Murrow awards, and a designation as a journalist of the year from the Atlanta Press Club. Most importantly, Josh is a devoted father of 3 who, get this, he delivered his own son unplanned when his wife skipped labour and gave birth in their bedroom. And something else you probably didn't know about josh, he filed a charge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against his employer, CNN's parent company Time Warner, demanding equitable paid paternity leave and he essentially won the claim a year later. And he did this while he was still an employee there.

Three takeaways from our interview: Why he thinks companies are resistant to giving their male employees equal opportunities when it comes to parental leave. Are we still stuck in the 50's? - Kind of. How parents can fight for policy change in their own work place, and how Josh personally reduces his taxes by as much as possible. Some personal stories for him as well to share. Stay tuned.

Here is Josh Levs.

[00:02:44]

[INTERVIEW]

FT: Josh Levs, welcome to So Money my friend. How are you? Congratulations on the book!

[00:02:52]

JL: Thank you for having me. And thanks for that. Yeah, it's a really exciting time.

[00:02:57]

FT: I so admire what you're doing. It's so needed right now in the world, in our culture, especially in the United States where parental leave is not on the top of the to-do list as far as corporate America's social initiatives and corporate initiatives. You have a very interesting story as far as how you got to becoming an advocate for dads and families, and then writing this book "All In", which is fantastic. Everyone go out there and buy this book for Father's Day and give it to any father and family you know. But Josh, I'd love for you to start with your story of how you came to this kind of realization that this was a very important and imminent issue, not only just facing your family, but families all across the country.

[00:03:45]

JL: Absolutely. Yeah, and you're exactly right in the way that you are setting this up Farnoosh. Of course, it is amazing how the United States is really an outlier in the world when it comes to these issues. And that is a real problem, and that's something that we all need to address, because it's not just holding back families, it's also holding back businesses. And it's something that I discovered through my experience. So you were asking about my story, the basic idea is, I'm a journalist and I was covering fatherhood along with other things. I was doing all sorts of segments on air on CNN, and I was writing columns about fatherhood. And then all of a sudden

the tables got turned, and I found myself, the dad in the news. Because all of a sudden I was being reported on because I was challenging a policy. What happened was, my wife and I have two sons, and then she was pregnant with our daughter. And we determined that when our daughter was born, I would be needed at home for a block of time. And there was a very unusual policy where I worked at Time Warner. You know, your listeners might do a double take when they hear this, but under this policy anyone could get 10 paid weeks to stay home and take care of a new baby, except a man who impregnated the mother of the child.

FT: [Chuckles]

[00:04:58]

JL: So it was that ridiculous. So if I had given up my child for adoption and some other guy adopted her, he would get 10 paid weeks. If she and I had used a surrogate or a sperm donor, I would get 10 paid weeks. But because I'm a dad in the whole fashioned way, the people who designed these policies could not conceive of the idea, could not imagine that a man in a traditional situation after his wife gave birth, might be wanting to stay home and do some caregiving. So I'd asked Time Warner privately and quietly to change the policy to make it available to me, and they wouldn't give me any answer. This was months before my daughter was born. Finally when she was born in emergency, still no answer. 11 days later I said, "I need to know. Am I coming back to work or not?" And that's when they said no they would not give me the policy. So I file legal action and that's the story.

[00:05:47]

FT: And you continued to work there which is the other kind of really crazy part. People listening to this and thinking, "I could never do this." I'm sure this is not a singular event. This is happening all over the country in terms of just failure for companies to really recognize dads as wanting to actually spend time with their children. It's not just a mother's job. But the fact that you sued, well you took Time Warner to task, you filed - what's the legal term?

[00:06:18]

JL: The legal term is called an EEOC complaint - it's the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. And the way it works is under Federal Law, it is not legal for businesses to discriminate based on certain factors including gender. So we filed a complaint for gender discrimination.

[00:06:31]

FT: And so while this was a little awkward, you admit, being that you are still employed there, you talk in the book that in fact you received a very surprising reception to this. A very warm and supportive reception.

[00:06:45]

JL: Yeah, absolutely. From my colleagues. You know, talk about being So Money. It's so important for workers in this country to know that we have rights. And one of the biggest things that I have learned in my experience and in reporting for this book, for "All In", is that people don't know their rights. Workers don't know that they even have rights and I was an exception in the sense that I knew that I had rights, and I was aware of some of these basics. And also, I had really good legal representation, so I found out. So basically everyone should know that if you are victim of discrimination based on certain factors such as race or religion or gender, you have the right to file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and if you do that, your business is legally not allowed to business you for it. You have legal protections for doing that.

So what happened with me was, I filed that and while I didn't hear much directly from the big bosses at the company, my colleagues learned from this. Many of them said to me, "We didn't know we had the right to do this. We never knew this was possible." And when I did go back to work because I had to because they wouldn't give me that benefit, yeah I got hugged and kissed in the hallway, and my back got slapped so much it got sore, and it was, like you're saying, it was a very warm, positive reception.

[00:08:04]

FT: And it was really the pre-cursor to the book in many ways because from that moment, it was victorious for you and now many, many, all Time Warner employee dads, it really set the stage for you to then go out and be an advocate on a much larger scale.

[00:08:19]

JL: Exactly yeah. And you're precisely right. That's what set the stage for "All In". What happened was, the night that I announce I was taking legal action, I posted it on Tumblr, and that night it was as though I'd unleashed the floodgates of love. All of a sudden all these groups, women's groups and men's groups, mom blogs and dad blogs, organizations founded by Maria Shriver and Sheryl Sandberg, these groups immediately came out supporting me on this and it was this Eureka moment for me. I started looking at this and I said, "Okay, what is it about my situation that is galvanizing so many people?" And I realized - and this is what the book's about - these policies, what we have in America, are backward laws, policies, and stigmas that are acting as gender police. They are pushing men to stay at work and pushing women to stay home. They're pulling us away from equality. So I realized that men and women together, all those who want equality, we are all in this together. And then as you mentioned, after I filed this, a year later Time Warner revolutionized its policy and made it much, much better, giving more time to dads in my situation, and more time to moms after a birth as a result of this.

FT: Yay!

[00:09:34]

JL: For example, we can galvanize together and we can get things done, and that's what as you know, that's what the book is all about.

[00:09:40]

FT: Yes, and I wanna talk a little bit more about the book. But one other sort of broader question for you Josh, given that you have your ear to the ground on this issue and you're meeting with all sorts of people on this topic. I don't think anyone would say publicly, "I don't believe in gender equality. I don't believe that dad's should be able to spend time with their kids. Yet, companies

are not bringing that to their - they're not making that too obviously at the forefront of how they run their companies, they're not implementing these beliefs. So why? Do people believe that I man's role is to be working and that a woman's role is more to be a house-taker, and care taker. Is that - what's going on? There's a disconnect.

[00:10:23]

JL: Exactly. It's such a disconnect. And here's what it is. A minority of people believe that, and they remain in power in corporations, and here's why. I found this so fascinating. You know, I grew up on "Free to be You and Me". You did too probably, this basic belief in gender equality, that the girls I was in school with when I was a young boy, that we could all grow up to achieve equal things in our careers. We had equal ability. But what happened was, our generation got into the workplace and we had children. And that's when we discovered that the workplace has never grown up. So why is it that we are the only country in the world with a developed economy, really the only country in the world. It's us and Papua New Guinea, that have no paid maternity leave. And why is it that so many countries have paternity leave, and we don't have any mandatory maternity leave? Because the thinking behind our structures is still out of the 1950's. The thinking is, women should stay home and men should stay at work. And why is that? Here's why, it's a vicious cycle. What happens is, most dads today are very involved with their kids, but the workplace rewards the few dads who aren't. There's a thing called "The Hours Stigma". So dads who stay at work and work extra hours, extra hours, extra hours, even if they're not overall more productive, they get rewarded because their bosses see them as being the kind of employees that they want. Then they work their way up the chain, they become in charge of the culture and the policies, and even with no ill intent, even if they're the nicest people in the world, they are out of touch with the fact that most dads are really involved with their families. And so they don't know what's going on in this respect. I explain in the book that there's a Harvard study that proves what I just said.

So what we need to do is introduce our corporate leaders and our government leaders to the realities of modern American families, and that will affect change.

[00:12:18]

FT: Amen. And it's very shortsighted Josh, because while yes in the short term you reward the most "productive" workers at least from a timestamp point, and they might be the guy, the gal that's most productive. If you're not rewarding the parents who are trying to balance time at home and at work and being a little bit more holistic in their approach to life, a lot of times women opt out because of this, and in the end everyone loses. Because you're basically eliminating really great workers.

[00:12:50]

JL: Yeah. And this is why in the subtitle in my book we point out that this is also about what's best for businesses. Because it's not been proven that when businesses implement gender-neutral policies that allow families to have choices, the businesses thrive and the entire economy thrives and it's such a simple thought if you think about it. Sometimes - a shocking concept to people in power - but sometimes the best person for the job is a woman. Of course that's the case. So why would you possibly want a system of law, policies, and stigmas that push the man to stay at work and push the woman to stay at home? You're not going to have a thriving business unless you give yourself the opportunity to make sure that men and women all have choices. More businesses are finding that out, some businesses in this country are now doing a really good job of making changes, and if we follow the steps in "All In", then together we can make this a real revolution.

[00:13:51]

FT: One of the arguments that I think companies have is, "Well it's expensive to allow our workers to leave for 12 weeks and pay them." And so you proposed something in the book that I think is revolutionary, but also very simple. Tell us a little bit about the 401K for family leave.

[00:14:08]

JL: Definitely. So the first thing to know about that is that - and I totally understand why businesses at first hear this, especially people who own small businesses - and they say, "wait a second, you're saying I have to pay someone to not work?" No, no no. I don't want you as a business to pay one cent. And when these policies are done right, businesses do not lose a

penny. We have existing systems already in California and New Jersey, and certain business leaders of national organizations said, "Oh we'll destroy jobs." It hasn't. It's the opposite. Businesses say they like the policies and there is through publicly funded insurance system where you basically pay a couple of pennies into this big insurance fund, and then when you need paid family leave for anyone in your family, you get it. So that is a very successful system in those states, and there's something on the table in Washington called the "Family Act" that would create that nationally, but because it technically requires the creation of a tax - even though workers come out ahead, businesses come out again - because it has that word "tax" in it - I explain in the book, I know from all these years covering politics, we all know this - something with the word tax in it might just get shut down in congress.

So what I proposed, and what you're referring to, is flipping the script. Let's create something that lowers taxes. We can lower taxes in this country to create paid family leave. And what I suggest is a 401K type system in which you could put away a certain amount of your money each year into a tax-free fund, and when you need paid family leave, you would have access to that money up to a certain amount, the same way structured in those states. I will tell you, I think my idea has a much, much greater chance of passing. But it still wouldn't do enough for a lot of people at the lowest ends of the economic spectrum. But for that we need all sorts of changes. We need living wages, and access to transportation, and healthcare, and those things. But this, what I'm suggesting, this 401K type system for paid family leave, this would help tens of millions of families.

[00:16:05]

FT: And is it actually, have you proposed this? Have you submitted this? Where is it right now in the world?

[00:16:10]

JL: Right, so the good news was that in this book you'll hear from people across the political spectrum. And there are prominent conservatives in this book who decided to come forward in this book and say they were originally opposed to the Family and Medical Leave Act, and that they now regret that. They think it turned out to be a good idea - that was for unpaid leave being

required. So what I found when I proposed this idea, is that across the political spectrum there was a lot of support for it. I have now contacted my senators and my congressmen to set up meetings to pitch the idea directly in the hopes that they will bring it before congress. I have not yet heard back, but I hope to, and I'll update you as soon as I do.

[00:16:51]

FT: Well hopefully the book is gonna be a great platform for you to get out there again and really make this a national issue, international issue, but mostly a national issue cause we need it most here on the home front. It's us and what, Papua New Guinea?

[00:17:05]

JL: Yeah. It's us and a handful of tiny islands that do not have paid maternity leave. And the idea that - you know, I just wanna emphasize this, and you totally understand this, I'm so glad to be talking to you - this is not a left or right conservative, liberal thing at all. This is just about what's basic and human. In our society we have paid public education. We have Medicaide for children because we understand that making sure basics are covered is what a society should obviously do. This is a basic. When a child leaves the womb, a child should have a parent at home who during that block of weeks, does not have to worry about putting food on the table. That's just a human need, it's an obvious basic, and this is something that we can afford because when we follow these systems in this book, our entire economy will improve and thrive. It's good for all of us.

[00:17:55]

FT: And I have to say, you know, I've been public about how I make more than my husband, but his job as far as the value that it brings to our family, you cannot measure it because his company provides pretty generous paternity leave, they're very good with flexible hours, they understand that family comes first, and my husband therefore feels very confident to leave a little bit early or work from home. There isn't this stigma, thank gosh. Cause sometimes, as you say in your book, the policy is there, the support is there technically, but a lot of men don't take advantage of it because there is this cultural backlash in the office space to say, "Oh, he's

gonna actually take the whole 2 weeks after his baby's born? How committed is he actually?" But fortunately that's not the case where my husband works. And that, hands down, is the only reason that I'm able to do my job the way that I do it, and that we actually get to see each other, including with our 11 month old. So praise to my husband's company.

[00:18:53]

JL: And as a result of that, as a result of the better policy, that company get's your husband's loyalty.

[00:18:57]

FT: Absolutely.

[00:18:58]

JL: That company get's your husband - happy workers, more satisfied workers are far more productive. Your husband is more likely to stay there. I have people in the book who suffered ridiculous stigmas like a man who had to run out because his baby was born in emergency. He just missed a couple of days of work. When he got back to work, his boss rebuked him because how dare he take off those 2 days, knowing exactly what happened. There's another boss in the book who told the man that he couldn't have the amount of time he was legally entitled to, because women are supposed to take care of kids unless they're in a coma or dead.

FT: Oh no!

JL: So this thinking in the workplace still exists, and it's ridiculous. And what you're finding is that men are leaving those places and they're going to work for places that respect them as fathers so that's yet another way in which these businesses thrive.

[00:19:42]

FT: Well let's not transition to my So Money questions Josh. We've gone a little over with talking about the book, but it is so interesting, I could talk about this book for hours with you. So let's just see what we can get to with our So Money questionnaire, and I wanna start with your financial philosophy. I wanna get in your head a little bit. What is your number one money mantra?

[00:20:01]

JL: You know, I need to come up with it in saying it in a mantra, but in my mind there is a very important comparison between taking care of money and taking care of your health through eating right and exercising. And here's where this came from: my financial planner is brilliant, Karen Lee, she's wonderful. And she mixes a lot of psychology into her work, helping people with their money. And she said that she found early on in her career that super smart people, she was talking to some amazing genius chemist who had all these problems with money. She realized that it's not, that a lot of people have such an emotional relationship to money. That they can't think straight about it. And when she said that to me, that's how I see a lot of people struggle with things like food and exercise. To me, eating healthy and exercising is just obvious. It's something that I don't struggle with because I don't have an emotional relationship to it. But I do have an emotional relationship to money. So what I have to do is learn to kind of let that go, and see money as being another way of taking care of myself and that's how that helps.

[00:21:07]

FT: Money's just another way of taking care of yourself. I like that. Let's trademark that.

[00:21:12]

JL: Okay I'll do it. [Laughs]

[00:21:14]

FT: Money memories, take us back to when Josh was little Josh. What was your exposure to money? You said that money was already an emotional issue, like you had an emotional

attachment to money, there were emotional complexities involved. How was that perhaps brought about from a young age?

[00:21:33]

JL: I remember being a kid and not being allowed to put change in the vending machine to get something out of it when all the other kids were. My parents, they didn't have a lot of money, and also were very big on saving. Which was a smart thing to do, but for me as a kid I couldn't internalize that at age 3 and 4 and 5, and I'm at summer camp and at the end of the day all the kids are getting ice cream - cause it was an ice cream vending machine. I used to - and this is probably not a great call - but I used to go on these rides to the airport to take my little cousin to the airport for all the wonderful trips he'd be taking around the country. And I would just stand there watching the airplane take off and I had never been in an airplane. And so I had this emotional relationship with money early on, which I felt deprived. I didn't really understand the idea that in the end you grow up and you make your own decisions and you make your own money. So yeah, so that emotional relationship, that emotional connection was established very early on for me as I think for a lot of people.

[00:22:33]

FT: And you were very young. You have very vivid memories.

[00:22:38]

JL: Yeah I do. People always says that. But I have like super specific memories from when I was 3 and 4 and 5 and 6. I don't know why, they just stick in my head.

[00:22:48]

FT: Well, has any of that ever created a financial fail for you where your emotions really got in the way? We're transitioning now to the financial fail portion of the So Money interview. Where I like to get guests to reveal their less than stellar moments with money.

[00:23:05]

JL: Yeah. I mean, I - my financial planner will be the first to tell you - I have had trouble in the past, I've gotten a lot better at it as I've grown into an adult, but trouble with the very concept of budgeting. I would have an emotional relationship with the concept of budgeting I would say. Because when I would look at a budget, that would put a limit on it. And to me, putting a limit was bringing back all those feelings from when I was a good about, "Well what if I want this? What if I want this?" So there were times where I went overboard with credit card debt. I've never been in any kind of danger or repo action, but yeah I had to learn that budgeting is not a bad thing. It can actually be empowering if you flip the script in your mind.

[00:23:49]

FT: So how did you flip the script?

[00:23:51]

JL: You know, I think a big part of it was growing up and taking responsibility for other people. I got married in my 20's and so I had my wife to take care of also. Then certainly when we started having children, even more so, it just became so obvious. I know that I need to provide for them. And this is what you'll find a lot of parents feel, and a lot of dads feel. That as a provider, this is like health. It's a lot like health actually, cause when you become a dad suddenly you wanna take fewer chances in a lot of things you do, whether it's motorcycle riding or whatever. You gotta watch out for yourself. And it's similar with money. When you have kids to take care of, suddenly you understand that you can't think that way anymore. You have to plan out, and so I started doing it.

[00:24:36]

FT: It's like primal instinct. They call it the "baby effect". As soon as that baby's born it's like, "Alright, I gotta roll up my sleeves and just do what has to get done." And if that's budgeting, or getting healthier, or saving, or whatever, you just make it happen because there is no other choice.

[00:24:53]

JL: The baby effect. I have not heard that, but I like that. That's great.

[00:24:55]

FT: Well some people also refer to the baby effect at the effect that got them to become more entrepreneurial. Sometimes people have these business ideas in their head, they want more career freedom. And suddenly their baby's born and they're like, "You know what? I'm not gonna answer to anyone else anymore." I get this a lot from entrepreneurs I interview on the show.

[00:25:13]

JL: You know, I'll tell you - I'm not gonna drag us back into the book, I just wanna say cause we're talking about this...

FT: No please.

[00:25:19]

JL: Okay. So this idea, this stress that parents feel at the moment a baby is being born - suddenly you worry about money in a whole different way - this is another reason that our backwards policies are so damaging because you wanna be there for every moment of your kids life but you also want to make sure you're working as much as possible so that there's enough money to take care of your children. And because we don't have any paid leave established in this country at all, there isn't even a block of time in which you can be home and feel secure financially in many cases in this country, and feel secure financially. So that drive to get back to work starts tearing at you right away, and that's why moms and dad's are feeling so much work-life conflict when they're one place they really feel like maybe they should be doing the other because their family needs both.

[00:26:06]

FT: It's just so layered. It's so layered. On the one hand you wanna be celebrating this joyous moment but you got this like pang in your stomach. This pit in your stomach of that, "What will work think of me? And how will I make ends meet cause I'm not getting paid?" It's nice to have the time off but if you're not getting paid, it's really hard to enjoy it and to appreciate it.

[00:26:32]

JL: It's the extra stress that you do not need when you are dealing with how to handle a newborn.

[00:26:36]

FT: Well I'd say you're really experiencing a So Money Moment now, Josh. What would you say though, more literally, was a So Money Moment where you experienced a really great financial triumph?

[00:26:49]

JL: I'll tell you this, I have been putting the maximum into my 401K since I was 25, and the maximum into every IRA I could ever open ever. And same with my wife. So one time, a few years ago, we were sitting down with my financial planner and I said, "Well let's just look at how all this stuff is doing?" And I guess I was like turning 40, and she pulled out where we stood on everything, and you know, in terms of saving up for retirement she said that we have more saved up for retirement than a lot of her clients who make more than we do. So that was a good feeling. And there've also been the times, like I referred to earlier, the credit card times. I always paid them off with no trouble. So that was another moment of feeling like, "Okay, I dug a hole, but I can dig myself out of it," and that was empowering.

[00:27:40]

FT: How do you like working with a planner?

[00:27:42]

JL: Okay so because my planner is so good and understands me so well and is so good with psychology, I love it, and I just highly recommend it. But I had, before her I worked with someone for 6 months who turned out to be horrible, terrible. So it's kind of like, you know in our industry, it's kinda like working with an agent. [Both chuckle] You know, is this the right person for you, or is it not? And are you the right person for them? It's its own form of marriage, and if you find the right marriage then you're good.

[00:28:13]

FT: I could not agree more. In fact, I had my CFP on So Money, episode 130 everybody check it out - Stacy Francis. I talk about her a lot and I think as many people write in curious about "how do I pick a planner? When do I know if I'm ready to work with a planner? And I often say what you just said: you gotta like the person, it's like you really wanna spend time in that first meeting, which is free, to really see if there is a connection and this person understands you and that they're asking you questions about your goals and your sensitivities as opposed to showing you projections and excel spreadsheets about how they've made all their clients all this money. This is really the time to get to know each other and see if you click.

[00:28:54]

JL: It's the same thing with a lawyer. You know, with my legal case, you gotta have a lawyer you feel really respects you and knows you. And vice versa. They deserve your respect. And when you find yourself in a situation like that, it's worth shopping around until you get the person who's just right.

[00:29:08]

FT: What's your number one money habit Josh?

[00:29:11]

JL: My number one, okay so I don't know if this counts as a number one money habit, but I always find out every way that I can possibly avoid taxes. [Chuckles] So...

FT: Do tell!

[00:29:27]

JL: So I maximize the 401K, there's that. Then I always maximize all of the flexible spending accounts that you're allowed to have. But you know Obama care, people either love it or hate it, but it's just one of the things that Obama care did was it cut the flexible spending account for health expenses in half. So I used to be able to put away 5K for medical expenses and not pay taxes on them. That has been dropped to 2,500. But I still do it. I maximize that, I maximize the IRA's, I look for every possible opportunity to lower my tax bill. And I have no regrets about that, no guilt about that. I'd say the government still gets plenty from me.

[00:30:05]

FT: And I probably don't have to tell you this, but now that you are an author, all the expenses related to publishing this book that you paid out of pocket can probably be considered a business expense.

[00:30:14]

JL: Oh yeah. And this is also why I pay - I never carry cash - I pay everything on credit card, which I know for some people is the wrong thing, but I pay off my credit cards. And this way I know, that even when I lose a receipt, I have a written receipt of every expense I ever go to that is tax deductible. And I wanna make sure I have that at the end of the year.

[00:30:32]

FT: I'm with you on that as well.

JL: Oh yeah, you got it too.

[00:30:35]

FT: Okay So Money Fill in the Blanks. If you won the lottery tomorrow, first thing you would do is _____.

[00:30:40]

JL: Okay, so the first thing I would do if I won the lottery tomorrow, I would be a stay at home dad for at least a couple years.

[00:30:46]

FT: Oh wow, that's great. But okay, let me ask you this - side bar. If you, especially for women, if you opt out of the work force for a number of years - and Sheryl Sandberg has this in her book, and you interviewed Sheryl for your book - for women especially, opting out there's a price. Re-entering means you're probably gonna make less money than you did before, assuming you're gone for a year or two. So how would you make the most of your time off to ensure that when you did get back into the workforce, you wouldn't be penalized?

[00:31:15]

JL: Right. That's a really good point. So there are some organizations out there that are now helping moms, and in some cases dads, at home do what's called piece-work. So you might do, a few months might go by and you say, "You know, I have 10 hours a week for the next month, I wanna do something like this for the company or for a company." And they will help organize that piece work for you. You say how much time you have, you say what your skills are, they will help you find that work. And then you do a good job for them, they might want you afterwards, or they might give you a letter of recommendation. And so when you have your resume you don't have to say I've done nothing for the last 2 years, you can say, "And in April of 2015, and June of 2015 or whatever, I did the following tasks." And so you do have that. Also, I think when you come back in the workplace, let them hear you roar. When you go back, you go around and you shake hands with everyone, you meet all the bosses and you say, "I have learned so much

about budgeting and financing and multitasking as a parent," because no one multitasks better than a great parent. And you show that those skills are valuable to them, and you make sure they know it.

[00:32:21]

FT: Great answer. The one thing that I spend on that makes my life easier or better is ____.

[00:32:26]

JL: My personal trainers. So I have these two friends who are personal trainers and I go to the gym, I try to make it there 3 times a week, and because I pay them - expensive, well it's not like crazy expensive, they give me a good deal - but it forces me to go there. It is the one thing that I do that's not for work and not for my family that really is for me. It keeps me healthy and energized and if I wasn't meeting them there, I would not be so good about making it to the gym. So that's worth it.

[00:32:57]

FT: Accountability, yes.

JL: Yeah.

[00:32:59]

FT: My biggest guilty pleasure that I spend a lot of money on, maybe too much, but you know what I love it.

[00:33:05]

JL: I spend too much money on food. It's a joke around CNN, like if you ask people at CNN headquarters in Atlanta about how much I eat, everyone will say that they don't understand how I eat so much. I eat a whole meal like every hour. And if I planned my food and booked it in

advance I could save money, but instead there's a bunch of good food I like in the building and I just go around and buy it. So that's probably not the best, that's guilty.

[00:33:28]

FT: Really? I spent a day with you. I didn't notice you were eating every hour or so. But maybe you were secretly.

[00:33:34]

JL: I was, plus that day when we were hanging out I had a huge protein shake with me and that helped.

FT: Oh, gotcha. Okay. That's so funny. Okay, well yeah. You would never know, you're a very trim guy.

JL: Thank you.

FT: One thing I wish I'd known about money growing up is _____.

[00:33:50]

JL: I would've benefited - and this is where I think all of us who are parents try to instil this in our kids - I wish that I had known how to separate money away from emotions, and maybe even see it as more of a fun thing. Kinda like a game. You know, when I was a kid I was into math, and if I had understood earlier on that there is - it's like Mary Poppins, the job that must be done is now made of fun. If I had found the fun in the idea of budgeting, in the idea of planning around numbers and "Oo what can I get?" instead of what can't I get? Then I think I wouldn't have had those years of the emotional struggle over money, and I think I would've gotten to where I am a little bit sooner.

[00:34:29]

FT: No one's ever quotes Mary Poppins on this podcast before.

[00:34:33]

JL: Hey, first time for everything right?

FT: Yeah. That's So Money

[00:34:35]

JL: [Laughs]

[00:34:36]

FT: When I donate money, I like to give to _____ because _____.

[00:34:41]

JL: Right, I saw this on the list and I tell you, I'm glad you ask it. My wife and I do give money to charity throughout the year. And then we take a look every year in like December, before the calendar runs out, what's left of what we can give. But we choose to do that privately. We don't even get listed, in general I say "No we don't want places to list us." Because to us it feels, it's fine for others to do it, but to us it feels even more charitable to not say the places, just to know that we are giving. So I can't give you the list but I can tell you that it's very important to us. I can also tell you that I do a ridiculous amount of research before I give to anywhere cause I wanna see what the overhead costs are and what's really gonna happen with those coins.

[00:35:22]

FT: Yeah and for listeners, GuideStar is a great website to look at overhead and they rank charities and so yeah, I'm a big advocate of doing your research because you don't want all your money to be going over to like Staples office furniture.

[00:35:39]

JL: Yeah and you wanna know. And you can also look, and you know this, you can look back at the previous year and say, "Okay, they collected how much and what did they do with it? And the year before that." You can get a sense of what their leadership is really doing with their money. I think being empowered in that way is So Money.

[00:35:53]

FT: And last but not least, I'm Josh Levs, I'm So Money because ____.

[00:35:58]

JL: [Laughs] Okay, I saw this and I said, "I think I have to ask Farnoosh whether I am So Money or not. Am I?"

[00:36:04]

FT: Of course. Everyone is So Money. Everyone is So Money, it's just a matter of thinking, what have I achieved? Or what's my lifestyle like? And So Money is really broad term. It's not like I've money in the bank.

[00:36:20]

JL: And I guess I would say, I'm Josh Levs and I'm So Money because I'm standing up for what's right. And I think there's a lot of us who are doing that and I think that ultimate is an important part at least of being So Money.

[00:36:31]

FT: I could not agree more. You absolutely are So Money Josh. Everyone check out "All In: How our work first culture fails dads, families, and businesses and how we can fix it together." Thank you for writing this book.

[00:36:43]

JL: Oh thank you. Listeners, they can get all the information they need at Joshlevs.com - J-o-s-h-l-e-v-s.com. Thank you for doing this and for having this podcast. I really appreciate it.

[00:36:52]

FT: It's my honor, and everyone, all the links over at Somoneypodcast.com as well and the transcript from this interview. Josh have a great week, and good luck with the book.

[00:37:00]

JL: Thank you so much.

[END]