

EPISODE 299

[INTRO MESSAGE]

[0:00:32]

FT: Welcome back to So Money everyone. Thanks for joining me! I'm your host Farnoosh Torabi. Well ahead of introducing today's wonderful guest I have to quickly share with you the charity fund raiser and competition that's going to be going on all month here at So Money, the entire month of November, in tandem with a charity fund raiser/competition going on with Joe Saul-Sehy's podcast. Stacking Benjamin's

To tell us all about that, I brought on Joe and Joe, here you go, take the mic, you invited me on to this little fund raiser of yours and I am excited but also a little nervous.

[0:02:14]

JS: Farnoosh, I'm way excited that we're doing this together, we can raise a bunch of money for charity. And I love this, at the end of the year with Thanksgiving, for people in the United States, we end the month of November with Thanksgiving. And I thought, "What a great way for our community to help another community that might need it."

So we are going to be raising money for the Texas 4,000, which is a 4,000 mile bike ride that University of Texas students take to raise money for cancer research and cancer related causes. I know that they give a lot of money the M.D. Anderson Hospital, one of the premier cancer treatment clinics in the United States, in Houston Texas and then they also give it to worthwhile research or facilities around the nation.

We're going to be raising money at Stackingbenjamins.com/texas4000. It's cool because our organization Farnoosh, has a lot in terms of where the money goes, a lot in common with what you're raising money for. Talk about that for a minute?

[0:03:13]

FT: Yes! Well thank you that was a nice transition. So I have chosen, your team here at So Money has chosen the largest student-run philanthropy in the world near and dear to my heart as well because I was a part of this when I was in college. It's the Penn State IFC Pan Hellenic Dance Marathon. It's affectionately known as THON and it's a yearlong effort to raise money and awareness for the fight against pediatric cancer.

It's raised over \$125 million for the Four Diamonds Fund at Penn State, Hershey Children's Hospital. Next year's THON, 2016 is what we are fund raising for now and that will be taking place February 19th through the 21st. It's a 46 hour dance marathon, I did it and I survived. It was life altering but of course it's for an amazing, tremendous, and important cause.

Thon.org/somoney is where you can go to contribute. I know it's high season for canning and this is a way to join in on the fun, anything you can do, know that it will be well spent. Over 95% of funds go to the families.

[0:04:22]

JS: That's so great. And the rider that we're riding for, who is riding in the Texas 4,000, her name is Shelby Schreiber, her father was a single dad raising her Farnoosh and when she was in high school, he started feeling bad. Went to the doctor, it turned out he had terminal cancer and he passed away when she was just in high school.

Here she is without a dad and now she decided she's going to ride this 4,000 mile bike ride in honor of him. They spend no money on the bike ride. All the food along the way, all the housing along the way has donated too. So I love these organizations but, Stackingbenjamins.com/texas4000 and I hope together we can raise a lot of money.

[0:04:58]

FT: I think we will. Thanks Joe.

[0:04:59]

JS: Thank you.

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:03:59]

FT: Happy Thanksgiving everyone, I'm reporting to you from Lancaster Pennsylvania, it's very lovely here. The weather is ridiculous, it's like 60 degrees on the east coast. Definitely one of the warmest thanksgivings I can remember. Here we are from the home where my husband grew up, feeling very grateful this year for my healthy and beautiful son Evan.

He's turning 17 months this month. I'm also thankful for Tim, my best friend, my husband, my sometimes guest on So Money and of course my supportive and loving parents and in laws. I'm also really thankful to have a career that I love, a home that I can call my own, my health and of course this year I'll be thinking and praying for all the families all over America and abroad that are having a tough time in Paris and Syria and the middle east.

I forget sometimes just how lucky I am. My parents for those of you who don't know came here more or less fleeing their homeland Iran in the late 70's, early 80's. I was born here but they came here with two suitcases, leaving a country that was in the midst of a dark war, a revolution and I personally would not be here today doing what I'm doing in the United states had it not been for the United States granting my mom and dad a permit to stay here and to work.

Ultimately earn their citizenship. For that reason and so much more, I am so indebted to this country, so grateful, so happy to be here and happy to be here with you. For today's episode we're going to do a throwback to my interview, my So Money interview, I recorded it back in July. The guest host was Joey Saul Sehy of Stacking Benjamins, you just heard him, we were talking about our charity competition which by the way I am losing.okay?

If you've got some spare change, if you have any desire to help THON and you want to help a charity that's supporting families, stricken with childhood cancer, this would be great if you

would do it. I would be so grateful, I would be so appreciative and we have the link over at Somoneypodcast.com but also if you go to THON.org/somoney, there you can contribute.

It's under my name but then you get the tax deduction and it doesn't all go to me, it's just, my name is the name of the group that they are putting the contributions under. Don't be confused by that but anyway, it would be great to beat Joe and not be the butt of his joke because as we know, the loser has to read an introduction written by the winner in January and I'm really scared because Joe's an excellent writer.

Do a girl a favor and contribute to THON. THON.org/somoney. It's for the kids. On today's episode, it's a rerun but if you missed it or you're looking forward to hearing it again, I share things with him that I don't think I've shared with anyone. Hopefully you'll enjoy it.

Anyway, wishing you and your family a blessed holiday everyone, wishing you health, wealth and happiness.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:07:07]

JS: Welcome back to So Money everybody. I'm your host Joe Saul-Sehy, and oh! Before you turn this off, this isn't the wrong channel. If you were expecting a voice far smoother than mine, specifically that of Farnoosh Torabi [Chuckles], well guess what? You're in the right spot because on today's podcast I have the interview and the privilege of grilling Farnoosh on the same topics that she asked Tony Robbins, Tim Ferriss, and all the other awesome guests she has on.

[INTERVIEW]

So are you ready?

[0:07:30]

FT: I'm so scared.

[0:07:32]

JS: [Laughs] You weren't supposed to talk yet Farnoosh!

[0:07:34]

FT: Okay.

[0:07:34]

JS: I haven't introduced you to your audience! They don't know you're here.

[0:07:37]

FT: Sorry.

[0:07:40]

JS: [Laughs] And so, here we go! I hope this is gonna be a great show.

[0:07:43]

FT: Can I talk now?

[0:07:44]

JS: Now you can talk Farnoosh!

[0:07:45]

FT: Okay thanks. Hi everyone!

[0:07:48]

JS: I'm lucky enough to tell you you can't talk on your own show.

[0:07:51]

FT: [Laughs] Well, I bow to you today. I'm just excited. This is fun changing things up a little bit. Obviously listeners have been asking me to take the hot seat and answer my own questions and I've been promising them, promising them, and I thought, "You know, I'm gonna wait for the right opportunity." I was on your show, you were on my show not too long ago as a guest and I thought, "You know, Joe's fun. He's very professional. I love Stacking Benjamins. We have a very similar audience in terms of what they're looking for." So I thought, "Hey Joe, why don't you be the host for the day?" And you were very kind and generous and here you are. So I'm just gonna stop now and let you take the lead again, and hopefully I'll have good answers for ya'll.

[0:08:31]

JS: Well here's what I didn't wanna do, because I know you sit through every single show and you ask people this list of questions and I'm sure, if you're like me, every time you listen to your guest and you go, "Oh here's how I woulda answered that." So you've been ready for this forever! And I wanna keep you on your toes Farnoosh! So I'm gonna ask you some of the same questions, but I'm also gonna throw in some of my own. Cause I want this to be more like a 60-minute expose, you know? Where the guest sweats a little bit, and then you realize we're really there because we realize that your product's default-y and a bunch of people are gonna sue you.

[0:09:02]

FT: Oh my gosh. Alright. Good thing there are no cameras rolling, at least! It's just audio.

[0:09:11]

JS: [Laughs] Oh no, no it's not gonna be that bad.

[0:09:12]

FT: Oh there's a hidden camera somewhere? [Both laugh]

[0:09:16]

JS: Yeah, I'm the guy looking in the window over there, right? Alright! So let's start here. I wanna ask you about your work because you've told me, when you were on our podcast the last - not the last time, but the time before that - talking about your book, that you're from a very traditional family, but you have a very non-traditional relationship with your husband when it comes to money.

[0:09:34]

FT: Yes, so I grew up in a household where dad made the money - a lot of the money - my mom worked here and there. I don't think she ever really enjoyed the career that she pursued. She sort of just worked to work, to make money and, I don't think, followed her passion and so she didn't continue with her career for very long. I would say growing up she was a working mom from my perspective, but my brother and I are actually 11 years apart and when he was born she more or less stopped working to raise him. And at that point my father was making enough money where they could have a single income household.

So it was more of less pretty traditional. The other kids in the neighborhood had moms that didn't work or fathers who were the main breadwinners. And also, add to that, we are a Middle Eastern family where it's definitely common for the men to be the patriarchs and to be the financial breadwinners and all of that. And for the moms to really be the caretakers. Ironic though, because I was always raised to be this very studious, aspirational, career-driven, young woman. In fact, when I wanted to date in my teen years, it was kind of an awkward topic. I couldn't really, I wasn't allowed to have a boyfriend - I'll just say it! But I definitely snuck around and I had a boyfriend and I almost wasn't allowed to go to prom, it was this whole debate.

My mom, we had this joke where my mom was like, "You can date when you're married." In other words like, just put relationships and dating like, focus on you. Put that to the wayside. Focus on you, focus getting schooled, and getting your education, and getting your career going and making money. So I was raised to be very independent. And I talk about this in the book. It's like there was this moment in my life where I felt that I had done everything that I was supposed to do, I got the degree, I got the master's degree, I started writing books, I was at the top of my career, and then I fell in love!

You know, I married for love. Yet I felt I was disappointing, in some ways, the cultural ideals of my family growing up, where this idea that Farnoosh is gonna be taken care of and she would marry this man that would come in and like support and be the breadwinner and he would be this - a doctor or a lawyer or CEO of his own company. That didn't happen! And I felt that there was a bit of scrutiny on that part of my life, the fact that I was making more than my boyfriend, then husband. And I felt very lost at sea a bit, emotionally, and financially we felt we had a handle on the situation but there was all this sort of emotional baggage that was coming along with it, feeling judged.

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JS: Were your parents actually negative Farnoosh? Or was that more, between your ears, what you expected them to be?

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FT: My mother literally told me once - and this is all in the book, I'm not breaking any news here. But basically she said to me, several times, that she was unsure about the relationship, that she was concerned for my well-being, she didn't think it would work out. She was very frank. Anyone who's got a Middle Eastern mother or a Jewish mother, an Italian mother, an Indian mother - [Chuckles] I feel like there's this undercurrent of mothers just putting it out there and nothing is ever a suggestion, it's like, "You should do this!" And I like to think it's a language barrier thing, that really in her mind she's thinking she's making a suggestion but it's just coming out very forcefully. So that was hard, and definitely weighed on our relationship.

We've since reconciled, and obviously now she's very happy for me. I've written a book about it! You know, and it's obviously all out there and we're okay with it. Everyone's "cool", but it definitely was something that I grappled with and I thought, "I'm wondering if other people are also experiencing this as well?" And it turns out, they were! Lots, and lots, and lots of relationships across the country experience a woman making more than her male husband or boyfriend, and it's a point of contention. Even if they're cool with it, society may not be, their family may not be, work friends may not be. You can just say, "Screw y'all!" But that's not really how life works. I could've just been like, "Mom, smell you later!" But that's not nice, you know? And that's not what I want. I want to actually have a good relationship with the people that I love, so how do you work on that? That was the challenge. And I talk about the results in the book.

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JS: Yeah, it's funny cause Cheryl and I at different times in our career, one has made more than the other. And it definitely changes the relationship as the money dynamic changes. Do you and your husband share a single chequebook? Because, you know, you've talked about that on your show quite a few times.

[0:14:12]

FT: We do have a bank account that we share that we opened up as soon as we got married. More just because it was logistically helpful. We had all these cheques that we wanted to cash from our wedding that were written out to the both of us. [Both chuckle] So, and we felt this was, for the first time in our lives, this was money that was gifted to the both of us, that we both received equally so we wanted to be fair about where that money was gonna go and that money now, is helping us. It's growing and we add to it, it's gonna serve not a lot of purposes but maybe one day it will become the money that we use to send our child to preschool or you know, there's enough in there that we can actually do something significant with it.

But for the most part we have our own accounts. We have a joint credit card that we use, again mainly to leverage to say, "Okay we're both gonna be spending, let's do it on one card to earn the points and be able to maximize our rewards. As far as everything else, it's pretty separate and I think that's largely to do also with the fact that, not so much the income disparity, it's really

the fact that we got married in our 30's, at which point we'd both been very accustomed to managing our own money, having our own bank accounts. It was just easier this way and we're very transparent still. We don't, you know, there's no lack of trust or any intimidation or fear or awkwardness as far as asking each other about our financial situations. You know, "How much is in your bank account?" We see everything on one portal, we share an online portal where we can see everything.

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JS: So it hasn't created any conflict?

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FT: Nope! Nope. And I credit the fact that we have maintained separate accounts for the fact that there is no conflict. I think that if there was only one bank account and everything was going into that bank account, it would just get sticky I think. I have to say, of all the couples that I work with and have coached, whenever there's bickering and disputes over spending, it's often I find when I ask the question "How do you manage your money?", they have one account. So I think that it doesn't work for everybody.

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JS: That's funny because as you know, from guests on your show, the proponents of a single bank account, they believe that that curtails the fight.

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FT: I find that the couples that have the single bank account that they are happy with it, married young. Or they married early enough in their life together that it was fine, it was more seamless. When you get married in your 30's, if it's a second marriage, it's a lot stickier and it's harder. Transferring your bank account - let's just get a Mint.com account, or let's just get some sort of software where we can see everything and we don't have to move money around.

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JS: I can't ask this next question without hearing you ask in your voice. What's your personal financial philosophy? [Chuckles]

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FT: [Laughs] "What's your personal financial philosophy?" I have many, as you know! I've written a book - "Psych Yourself Rich" was really all about mindset and the way you think about money. And I've got a whole chapter devoted to financial philosophies. I have several.

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JS: What's your favorite though?

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FT: I would say that "no one cares more about your money than you!" And okay, maybe Suze Orman said that first. [JS laughs] We discovered this on a recent podcast together. Whatever, I'll share this with her. But it's true! I think that you have to be your biggest advocate when it comes to money. I have experienced this myself. I've experienced this today! I mean, yesterday. I'm going through a big renovation right now with my home. If I am not on top of every single line item in that budget from that contractor, if I am not constantly emailing my architect about this, that, the other thing, I would get screwed! I would get screwed over, I would get over-charged, things would get expensed that I didn't want to get expensed. So that's one example. But all through life, what this means - being your biggest advocate, excepting that no one cares more about your money than you - I think it empowers you to really ask the questions to speak up, to negotiate.

Don't ever wait for a handout, don't ever wait for an opportunity to come knocking. You have to be out there seeking those opportunities, creating those opportunities for yourself, because at the end of the day, it's your money, it's nobody else's. And so protect it, respect it, nourish it and it's a philosophy that has really helped carry me through, good times and tougher time and I

think it's something that, as I say and I repeat to myself and as I do this podcast daily, it comes up a lot. It rings really true in my life. And I think it's something that I love to share it to a lot of people. It's a mindset, really. It's not a philosophy that talks about how to move your money or how to earn or how to save. It's really an over-arching philosophy that can help you in all regards when it comes to money.

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JS: Yeah, own it.

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FT: Own it.

[0:19:25]

JS: Money memories, what is your earliest money memory?

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FT: My earliest, well the earliest money memory is when I was 5-years-old. We were at the mall, I think I was five or six? And I was having a bad day. I was a bad-day-Joe. I was like having just the case of the grumpies and I was upset because I couldn't buy anything. I had no money. Every time I wanted to get something I had to ask my dad, and my dad was, although in some ways he was the easier one to trick and convince that I needed something, he was also sometimes the most resistant when it came to like if you were out with your dad shopping, you wouldn't buy something cause was afraid what your mom would say when you got home. "Why did you buy her these shoes? She doesn't need shoes!" So depending on his mood, or whether he was willing to take it from my mom that day

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JS: You had to manage it!

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FT: Had to manage it! So I was at the mall with my dad, and actually my dad's cousin, and I was sitting on the bench with my dad's cousin and he's like, "Turn that frown upside down Farnoosh! Why're you so sad?" I was like, "I just, I wish I had my own money! This sucks!" That's probably not what I said, but you know, I was feeling blue, and he's like, "Well you know what? Do you have an allowance?" And I said, "What is that?" And he said, "It's when your parents pay you money and you go and do whatever you want with it. And I was like, "That is brilliant!" No one has ever taught me this concept. I was six! What did I know?"

So my dad came over and he was like, "What are you guys talking about?" And I was like, "Well uncle Ali over here," I called him uncle cause you know, "great cousin"? So I just called him uncle Ali. And I was like, "Uncle Ali says that I should get an allowance!" And my dad kinda looked at him like, "Seriously dude? We were trying to avoid this topic for as long as possible." So I was like, "This sounds excellent!" So he was like, "No!" So Ali became like, Uncle Ali was sort of my negotiating partner in the conversation at this point. He was like, "Listen, I think she should get her own allowance. I think that she's voicing that she's ready to work with money, do something with money. What are you willing to do for it?" And I was like, "Well," and so we discussed like what I would do. And I think we negotiated \$4 or \$5 a week, which, that was a lot of money back in 1985. That's a lot of money now for a 5-year-old [Laughs] every week.

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JS: The point of this story was gonna be that you learned you needed a good agent!

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FT: Well, perhaps that planted the seed. I have an agent now.

JS: Yeah.

FT: So he negotiates for me, but I was there in the negotiating at this point on this bench in the mall. And my dad, I think under the pressure from his relative who was visiting, he was like, "Okay fine, we'll do an allowance," and that's all I remember though. I don't ever remember getting the allowance after that conversation, or doing anything with the allowance. I just remember that conversation happening actually I ran into my uncle, not ran in - he visited. He lives in Kuwait and he visited us a few months ago, and we still talk about this story. And I think, I remember it as being like a \$4, he's like, "No! I got you \$5. Don't you ever forget. That was \$5 that I negotiated for you." That's my earliest money memory. Farnoosh feeling very insecure and helpless because she didn't have her own money, and wanting just to find ways to make it. And I'm like, "I'm 5, no one's gonna hire me. I can't do anything. What do I do?" And an allowance!

Actually, I just wrote about allowances for Money Magazine. If you catch the - I think it's the July or August issue out now about the new rules to an allowance. And back then I had to do chores, but now parents are switching it up and saying, "Chores are just things you have to do. You're not gonna get paid for that, but if you wanna enterprise your way to making money, that's a conversation we can have." So there are parents all over the country saying to me that their kids are coming to them with business ideas or projects that they can do around the house, and then they negotiate the salary, or the income, or the pay and that's how they earn their money, which I think is brilliant!

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JS: Well my friend Shannon Ryan, over at the Heavy Purse, talks a lot about kids and money and they have a "Jobs" board where she posts jobs.

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FT: Awesome.

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JS: And if they take different jobs...

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FT: They have to interview for the jobs? That'd be so cute!

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JS: They have to put together the plan of exactly how they're gonna accomplish whatever the job is, which is pretty neat. And of course then there's Bill Dwight over at Famzoo who was on your show, who talks about that kind of stuff too.

[0:23:48]

FT: Oh yeah, for sure. I interviewed him for this article in Money Magazine. That's awesome! I'm gonna inherit that when Evan is a little older. He's 13 months, so I'm thinking like in a few months we can incorporate the job sport?

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JS: The job word mite might not work yet. So how does that story though, shape who you are today? Because after "Own It" that story's more about "Ask for it and hopefully somebody else will pay for it!" [Both laugh]

[0:24:13]

FT: No, I think for me, that just is a sign that little Farnoosh always had it in her to achieve financial freedom. For me, money was freedom. It was the freedom to make my own choices, I didn't have to ask for permissions, for everything. And so I saw really money as this tool to get what I wanted, to become more of an adult, to be able to exercise my freedom and I still see it as being that way. I still see as, when you're able to earn your own money, and perhaps that's why I am the breadwinner of this marriage, cause I don't ever wanna be dependent on someone for money, that would be one of the scariest things, I think, to experience.

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JS: I needed a spouse that was someone who was independent also, and that we could be independently great separately, but even better together. You know what I mean?

[0:25:04]

FT: Yeah, yeah. The thing about my husband and I is like we both encourage each other to just kill it, you know? And to do as best we can in our respective careers. We're each other's biggest advocates, and so individually we are rockstars, and together when we synergize it's even more powerful and great.

[0:25:24]

JS: Yeah, and nothing against families where the family dynamic is one really supports the other's career and really they move in just one direction. That just isn't my family, and clearly not yours either.

[0:25:35]

FT: No, but I will say though that our dynamic would not work if Tim had a similar career as I do. We couldn't be going - I go 100 miles per hour every week..

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JS: Well it'll mostly be because you'd wanna squash him!

[0:25:51]

FT: [Laughs] Exactly, I would destroy him! No but, his job is awesome. He gets to do what he loves, but also he works for a company that is very generous with their flex-leave and their flex-time and he can negotiate working from home, and that helps me tremendously. For example, this morning I almost had to cancel this podcast because my nanny was - came to work, but came home to our house this morning, sick as a - just totally sick. We've all be carrying

something the last few weeks. For those of you who know, my voice has been, I sounded like a...

JS: Raspy.

FT: Very raspy over the last few weeks. So eventually I think she caught our bug and, but she's so great. She came in anyway and she's like, "I think I have to go home." I'm like, "Please go home! We'll figure this out." And my husband was about to catch a train to D.C, and he's now, he's still here. He's delayed his train so that he can watch our son while I complete my podcasts. Otherwise, I probably would've just sedated my son... No I'm kidding! I would've, I dunno. I would've had to reschedule and run re-runs basically this week.

[0:27:01]

JS: Only people with kids would laugh at that! [Both laugh]

[0:27:03]

FT: I know.

[0:27:04]

Remember before you had kids and you'd crack a joke like that...

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FT: "That's horrible!" I'm not serious people!

[0:27:10]

JS: Right. Exactly. Okay, so here's the 60-minute griller question and this one, I'm sure the answer to this Farnoosh, is gonna make the front page of the Inquire. I've been waiting forever to ask you this. Here we go.

Has Farnoosh ever had a financial fail?

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FT: Of course!

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JS: No way!

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FT: Oh my gosh! I've had several. Although they all happened in a very condensed period of time. I was stupid in my 20's. I was ill-prepared for the reality of having a bank account and a credit card in my college years and in my early 20's. I distinctly remember one summer in college, I was working at, I was still at - I went to Penn State and I stayed the summer and I made a butt load of money. I was very good at earning, not good at managing the money. I spent that summer working. I had like three jobs, I saved thousands, I earned thousands of dollars that summer but I had nothing to show for it at the end, except for actually a negative bank account because I had overdrawn. I'd over-drafted my chequing account.

At one point I used to do this thing where I used to go to the ATM, take the receipt, and then whatever it said at the end of the receipt, that's what I thought I had in my bank account. I never checked my bank account balance anywhere else, or any way else. Which, as we know, and I learned the hard way, there is a delay in what the ATM receipt says and what is actually the reality of your bank account.

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JS: There's a way of approaching the shore!

[0:28:40]

FT: Yes! Oh yes. At one point I was using my debit card, and I hate using debit cards these days. I try to avoid it as much as possible. But I was using a debit card in college and a couple of days go by and I'm just spending, spending, spending. I finally go on, and then I didn't have any money left.

Like I got rejected at the store and I was like, "What? That can't be possible!" Checked my bank account, there was like \$200 in overdraft fees. I'd over-drafted probably 10 times, but actually maybe there is a good lesson to this story. I called the bank, it was a credit union. Digital Federal Credit Union, I'm still with them, they're a top notch credit union. Called the guy at the credit union and I said, "I'm so sorry! I didn't know that I didn't have enough, and I mean, the debit card kept working.

So what was I supposed to think?" He said, "Look, I understand. It's your first big mistake and I see that you couldn't have really known unless you had checked your bank account. But alright, I'll just give you one slap on the wrist." So I went from a \$200 fee to a like \$20.

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JS: Oh that's awesome!

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FT: Yeah, in one phone call. Which was nice. But I still had to fill that bank account again. I had no money left, so basically for a week I just ate out of my cupboards and didn't spend any money until my cheque came in and I was able to replenish the bank account. But that was a very early lesson in managing a chequing account.

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JS: Did you find yourself starting to use a spending plan at that point? Or was it still a series...

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FT: I decided to start making more money.

[0:30:15]

JS: Ah yeah!

[0:30:16]

FT: I of course went through the budget. I was a big Excel spreadsheet person in my 20's. I would write down everything I was spending my money on. I would budget, and I would foresee cost of things and food and, "Okay, this month I'll probably spend this much money on Subway and whatever." Both the sandwich and the metro! I was a big \$5 footlong girl for many years in my 20's.

[0:30:41]

JS: It doesn't have to be either or. It can be both!

[0:30:45]

FT: [Laughs] So I definitely was watching every penny. But it got to the point where I was just talking to Paula Pant at Afford Anything before we got on our podcast, and she's airing soon and I thought, and we had this conversation where it's like, "You can always earn more. There's a point to which you can save, after which you're living like way below your means and you probably have to live in your car in order to continue saving." I didn't have a car, I would have to live in the subway.

So I just decided I'm gonna start freelancing and make more money and just hustle. Hustle, hustle. I started babysitting, pet-sitting, freelance writing. I did it all so that I could recover the hole that I had developed for myself in my early 20's. And by now I had some student loan debt as well from my master's degree, and cutting my lattes wasn't gonna do it. I wasn't even drinking

lattes! I was like, "What am I gonna cut? My free coffee from work that I'm now drinking because I'm so poor?" So I had to learn another way, and that was earning.

[0:31:48]

JS: Which is interesting because, I mean while that's a solution, and I love Paula. Paula's on our show every Monday on Stacking Benjamins, and she's always talking about, or just I guess efficacy is the right word. That's a billion dollar word. [Chuckles] But just the usefulness of earning more money versus trying to pinch every penny. But the frustrating thing is that for some people, that's when the rat race begins, right? You earn more and that empowers you to spend more. And then you earn more, you spend more, and next thing you know your expenses are ballooning out of control.

[0:32:20]

FT: Well you have to be disciplined about it and really know what your objective is when you're earning more. My intent was not to earn more so that I could quickly spend it. I had an objective. I was able to save a lot, I was able to pay off my debt, I was able to yeah, go out and have a few more dinners with my friends and not stress out about it.

But I also, for me, I was lucky because I was doing, some of the things I was doing to make extra money I really enjoyed. And I was able to leverage those experiences to get other opportunities that advanced my career and eventually helped me to be independent and be a freelancer full time. So it's really what, you have to really be well-intentioned when you start to make more money. And it's not just to make more money to make more money.

Like, as I always say, "Your money is meaningless unless you attach it to goals". So if you're bringing in an extra \$200 a week, you better know where that money is going, and make it meaningful.

[0:33:22]

JS: Right, cause otherwise it'll find some place to go.

[0:33:25]

FT: Yeah, it'll just - and somewhere, you won't even know where it went. And then you have to work more to kinda feel like you're still ahead.

[0:33:33]

JS: And I was gonna ask you about that, as you're earning more money, there had to be something along the way that you bought that you thought, "Why did I buy this?"

[0:33:41]

FT: Oh my gosh! You know one time, oh my gosh I can't believe I'm saying this. It ended well, but so I got a new job at one point. I got a huge pay raise from transitioning from, I was working at New York 1 making like \$45,000 a year as a producer and I really wanted to stay at New York 1 and try to rise up the ranks there, become an on camera reporter, eventually maybe an anchor and I really, really loved the work place.

They just worked ready for me to to do that as quickly as I wanted. So I started looking elsewhere, I got a job at Thestreet.com, launching their video channel, working with Jim Cramer. I managed to negotiate, I doubled my salary when I went there. So for a young woman living in New York to suddenly double your salary in one job interview...

[0:34:34]

JS: BAM!

[0:34:36]

FT: Bam! Plus I was still freelancing, so I was about making six figures at 26. And I was feeling, like this was the problem: I hadn't actually put the numbers through an Excel spreadsheet. I was like, "Six figures! I'm a six," like this was the running song, "I'm a six figure lady!" This was just like my theme song. I was walking down the streets of New York like I was like, "I could buy this,

I could buy that. I could buy all of y'all some drinks," and I remember, as I was transitioning into this job, I attended a fundraiser for my friend's company. And at this fundraiser they had a silent auction going on for this Vespa... Do I have to tell you the rest of this story? So I had a few beers...

[0:35:23]

JS: The trains already in slow motion.

[0:35:25]

FT: Yeah, I had a few beers, nobody had bid for this Vespa and so to make my friend who had thrown this event, to just kind of for beeps and giggles, I put my name down. I started the bid at the minimum, which was \$5,000. And what the heck am I gonna do with a Vespa? I hadn't thought it all through, Joe. I just, I was like, "I'm gonna put my name down on this list, and hopefully it'll encourage other people to, inspire other people to also bid.

[0:35:57]

JS: Cause there's no way you'd win!

[0:35:58]

FT: Cause there's no way I'd win! I'm the first bidder, and it's a beautiful Vespa. \$5,000 I think was below market price for this. So an hour goes by, and I hear, "Congratulations to our Vespa winner, Farnoosh Torabi!" And I was like, "WTF? Oh my gosh." And so I got all excited, yeah I played the part. I'm like, "Hey, woohoo! I'm so excited." I got on the Vespa, I posed for pictures. No idea what I was gonna do. And I had the money, but I was like, there's the insurance, I gotta garage this thing, I don't know how to drive a Vespa, so I have to learn and probably pay lessons to get that. I gotta pay money to get the license. So quickly it was becoming a much bigger financial investment than I had really thought about.

And so I just never went to go pick it up. And I never sent in the cheque for the auction, and luckily I never had to because somebody else bought it off me.

[0:37:03]

JS: Oh good.

[0:37:04]

FT: Yeah. Months and months and months later. Maybe even a year later, this thing just sat and the company kept, like every like four months or so I'd get an email. Like, "So, what are you thinking? Like do you want the Vespa? You know, if you don't, let us know, we'll find another buyer." And I was too embarrassed to say I didn't want it. I wanted to just have it go away [Chuckles] without me having to be the bad guy or the loser.

[0:37:29]

JS: If you ignore the problem it'll just go away.

[0:37:31]

FT: So this is a failure and also perhaps, how did we get to this? I don't even know? Did you ask me a question?

[0:37:38]

JS: Yeah, this was the biggest train-wreck thing you ever bought.

[0:37:40]

FT: Oh! So this was it. I never ended up owning it, but it was for a while a big source of stress for me. Because I'm like, "Oh my gosh, like I have to really, if I have to pay for it I have to pay for

this and I'm gonna be like \$7,000 in the hole when it's all said and done, and nowhere to go with this Vespa."

[0:37:56]

JS: There was a time though that you had a huge, huge like breakthrough. When was that?

[0:38:02]

FT: Oh my gosh, when "You're So Money" came out. My very first book, I was asked to be on The Today Show and I think I didn't sleep for like two months before I went live on The Today Show.

[0:38:18]

JS: You had that kind of notice? It wasn't like, "Be on next week"?

[0:38:21]

FT: No it was a lot of notice, yeah just a little insider insight for y'all who wanna publish books and get on mainstream media like shows like Good Morning America, The Today Show. They have separate departments that book authors for books and they, you know, you can only imagine how many books they get. And at least my producer, she was very good and worked ahead of schedule. But we had about eight weeks of time. So it was good in that sense, I had time to really prepare myself. But I was still, I was like a bat out of hell when I was on that four minutes with Meredith Vieira, I talked so fast!

I called her old, and I rambled. I remember we were done and I thought, "Ah I blew it! [Grumbles] I'm so embarrassed." You had to like peel me off the couch! But then the producer came up to me and she said, "That was interesting. So we wanna have you back." I think it was cause I was such a spectacle, I was, I mean I called Meredith Vieira old. I didn't mean to, but more or less I did. You have to see the clip. I can't, I'm not gonna even explain. I mean I was just

trying to say that, she asked me, "Why would anyone wanna read this book written by a young adult versus somebody who was more, who was older and more experienced?"

And my thing was like, "Well we don't want to read a book from someone who's like your age because we want someone who is kind of entrenched in this universe that we're living in as millennials, as young adults who are poor and trying to become successful but we don't have a road map and we know what the right things are to do, but we don't know how to get started. And it's just a more honest kind of take on the reality that so many of us are experiencing. I was less eloquent when I was 27 or 28, however old I was.

But it did catch her off guard, and we had moment of laughter about it. I was mortified on the inside! I was crying, sobbing on the inside and I think she was having fun with it. The producers were definitely heckling. And I think that's what honestly won me back, and back, and back. And that was my breakthrough moment career wise because getting on The Today Show consistently, while they didn't pay me, was a wonderful platform to have and just was very helpful in getting me on other shows and getting me other books and getting me out there and known. So I think that was probably the breakthrough career moment for me.

[0:41:01]

JS: That's funny that a moment you would think is so bad was also...

[0:41:04]

FT: Oh my gosh, I thought it was over.

[0:41:07]

JS: Wow. Did you get to know Meredith very well then after that?

[0:41:10]

FT: Not really well, but she's very kind. I mean I've met a lot of people on air and a lot of talent - "talent" I put in air quotes - and hosts and anchors, and she's by far the most genuine, the kindest, the sweetest, she just makes you feel at home. And while we didn't have a ton of run-ins, she was often doing like harder news reporting, I was always delighted when she was the anchor across from me. And actually, I was on her talk show not too long ago as a guest. So I was very happy to reunite with her. I don't think she remembered me and I didn't have time to kind of bring it up and I didn't actually want to. "Remember me? I was the woman who called you old?"

[0:41:56]

JS: That's true though that she's very as she appears on TV because she has such a charisma about her just as we're all people, it's all very relaxed, and I think that's her MO.

[0:42:08]

FT: Yeah, no she is one of the most liked and likeable people I think in the industry, which is why I think her career has done so well. I mean, it just goes to show you being a nice person is a good thing.

[0:42:20]

JS: Well that leads me to my next question, which is not from your sheet, which is a couple other career moments. How did you end up working with Jean Chatzky?

[0:42:29]

FT: So funny story, I was in college realizing that I wanted to pursue journalism. Oops! I wish I'd known this earlier cause I'd now been two years entrenched in the business school and studying finance. How the heck am I gonna transition without necessarily delaying my graduation? And so I decided to, I found this internship program as I was researching ways to transition. And I found this internship program from Time Inc. at the time, that was selecting I think it was like 100 students across the country. It was an annual summer program, they would

place you at one of their magazines that Time Inc. owns. Money, Fortune, Real Simple, InStyle, People, Time, Entertainment Weekly. So they had tons and tons of places to put you as an editorial intern.

As a finance major I applied, I had some writing experience, I was the editor in chief of my high school newspaper, I was working at the school paper in college - although I was working on the advertising sales side. But I was a good writer and I think I made a compelling case to be an editorial assistant intern in this program at one of the financial magazines, whether it was Fortune, or Money, or Fortune Small Business which I think has folded since. But I applied, and then I went away and I studied abroad in Paris for the year and I got a call, or an email when I was in Paris from the HR lady at Time Inc. saying, "Hey, your application came across my desk, we're really interested in you, but I just wanna make sure that you didn't make a mistake on this application. You say here that you wanna work for Money Magazine? You know we own some other magazines, right? Like you wanna work at Money?"

[0:44:16]

JS: Why do you wanna do that?

[0:44:18]

FT: Alright! I think I was the only kid that applied to work at Money Magazine and so that's why I got the job! Because it was not of interest of, I mean who would - really, for me I just saw this as an opportunity to get into the industry, like I didn't know if I actually did wanna work at money, but I was like, "This is my way to get into the program. And then when I'm there I'll meet other people. I could maybe come back the next summer working at a different magazine if I decided I didn't wanna pursue financial journalism. Maybe I wanted to go into," — I mean ideally I think at that point I would've liked to have been at Time Magazine covering global issues or pop culture.

But I was like, "What's the most likeable place that I could land, given my experience as a finance major?" Personal finance magazine! So I just put myself in their shoes. And so they were like, "Well you have all the ingredients to work here, we just wanna make sure this is really

what you wanna do. Cause there aren't a lot of competition." So I said, "Yeah I'd be happy. I'm just happy to be there. I would love the opportunity."

So that summer I started at Time Inc., got an internship, it was fantastic. It paid, they gave us housing, it was a dream come true for any intern. And I made great friends, and my job at Money entailed working with none other than Jean Chatzky. That summer we worked together, and then I went on to complete my senior year in college and then when I graduated from college I attended graduate school for journalism, which was a 10 month program. And as I was about to graduate, my boss from Money - not Jean - but another boss called and said, "Hey, what are you doing? I heard you're in New York studying."

I said, "Yeah, I'm actually graduating in a few weeks." And he said, "Hey, why don't you come back? We need some summer help and maybe it could turn into like a full time gig. We could pay you a little bit more than your internship from the summer ago, you'd be sort of a glorified intern." And I said, "Yeah sure. I had great memories there and I would love going back." And at this point I was even further, I was more experienced, I was working with Jean even more closely. So I got a lot of opportunities to work with her, and so yeah, that's how it happened.

[0:46:29]

JS: Well definitely are different people and have different stories. Your demeanor is very similar, and the way that you come across is very helpful people, very easy to work with, very kind. Like you enjoy the relationship that you have with the people who trust you to ask you questions about stuff. Does that come specifically from Jean? Or is that kind of the reason why the two of you got along? Do you think you learned that from her?

[0:46:56]

FT: I learned so much from Jean. I mean, my personality is my personality, but I definitely think that I learned so much about professionalism, just how to maintain relationships, good relationships in your career. Work ethic, she's one of the hardest working people I've met. She's very independent, so I learned a lot of excellent things from her that I definitely have taken with me and she knows this and I attribute so much of my success to having had that brush of

experience with her. It was one of my most pivotal job experiences for sure because also the other thing I learned from Jean, and I've told her this she's been on my podcast. She's one of my inaugural guests.

I said, "What I really learned from you that I never learned in school, that I'm pretty sure that even today if you were to shadow a class at the Columbia School of Journalism, they would not be teaching you this - is how do you be entrepreneurial as a journalist? How do you do it? How do you go out there on your own and make it happen? And make a career that's viable? How do you create a brand? What is a brand? How do you do all of the above, book writing, speaking, podcasting, being on The Today Show, magazine writing - how do you do all of that? Where does it start? How do you, what's the secret to that formula? There's not one formula, but I definitely learned from Jean that there's a lot you can do with a journalism degree. And that you don't have to be pigeon-holed into just doing radio or just doing magazine writing or just doing TV. In fact you can do it all, and you can do it all really well.

[0:48:31]

JS: It comes back to your personal financial philosophy, which is own it. It's the same with your career.

[0:48:35]

FT: Yeah, and really what you're doing is you're storytelling, you're helping people and so you can do that across - and the platforms are just platforms. You know you're just carrying the good advice and the good energy across the different mediums to reach more people. And if you're excited about that and can do that, you should because it's a way to make more money, but more importantly, reach more people, help more people and diversify your own skill set. And I think also give yourself more job security along the way. If one door shuts, another one is still open, another one opens.

[0:49:11]

JS: Which is funny because I think, as I mentioned earlier, that you have a lot of traits that are similar to Jean. Working with Cramer just seems night and day.

[0:49:23]

FT: [Laughs] Cramer was, so I said one of the most pivotal job experiences was working with Jean Chatzky. The other was working with Jim Cramer. Yes, very different. I don't think anyone is like Jim. He is, I think, what I learned from him was so many things, but I think what really changed me was, "If you're gonna do anything, do it extremely well. Come prepared, be respectful, and know your audience." I learned all of those things from Jim. And if I already knew them, they were solidified working with Jim. He is hard to please, that man. But when you do come up and you show up and you're well researched and you are kind and you are respectful and you are hard working, he appreciates that. He rewards you for that.

And I see it in his own work. He is extremely well read, he has a genius that I will never have - that most people will never have. He's a walking Encyclopedia of the stock market, of the history of the world, he's brilliant. Not just about stocks either, he could talk - he could hold a conversation about politics. He could hold a conversation about sports, about real estate, about everything! He's just a renaissance man and people, a lot of people don't know this, but he has many businesses that you don't see. I think he still runs a popcorn business, he's got real estate. And so he's very entrepreneurial, he's also a great dad, and I just really admire him. I mean certainly there were days that I was frightened of him [Chuckles].

He's a demanding guy and he's very hard to please sometimes. He also was a co-owner in the company, so you didn't wanna cross him, but he's a friend now and I don't think I thought that was gonna end up being the case. Like I just thought this was gonna be like a guy that I worked for that's gonna be really demanding. And he was, but also he really was appreciative of people that showed up and delivered well. I hosted a show with him on Thetstreet.com TV called "Wall Street Confidential" for a couple of years. And I wasn't the first choice for that show. They went through several other hosts before they finally came to me and it was hard shoes to fill when I was put in the host chair, but I just, I didn't pretend to know things that I didn't know, and I showed up asking good questions having read - he gets up at three in the morning, and by 6 AM he's written like four articles.

[0:51:54]

JS: Holy cow!

[0:51:55]

FT: So, and also he's had a workout, also he's had probably a conference call, and he's had a nutritious breakfast. I've maybe woken up and brushed my teeth by 6 o'clock, on a good day. So I had to really catch his speed and catch up to him, and I tried my best. And certainly days I felt like I just failed, and then other days were a home run, and those days were what made up for the other days.

I joke that I would like light candles before I would like go in an interview and like do a seance and like, cause like, "Please be in good mood today! Please let me remember how to speak!" I wasn't there to prove anything, like I think some of the other hosts wanted to challenge him and I think, you know, I respect that. But also I wanted to keep my job, so I just I was aware of how to keep it balanced.

[0:52:50]

JS: So Farnoosh, let's skip ahead to the Fill in the Blank rapid fire, otherwise this is gonna be a six hour podcast. I wanna ask a little bit different questions than you've been asking your guests. So I wanna do the Entrepreneur On Fire thing that John Lee Dumas asks his guests, which is:

You're stuck on desert island, you only have a couple items to create a new business. What would those, let's say 3, what would those items be and how would you create a business out of them?

[0:53:18]

FT: Okay. Wow. Well, so I have exactly - I know what I would do. I've been on the podcast, I've been on John's podcast so I probably gave different answers then. But now having done the show and interviewing so many entrepreneurs, I kinda feel like I have a better sense of what it takes to start a business. I would need a wifi connection and a laptop - that's 2 things.

And so, access to the Internet would be included. And then would want, can I bring my son? I that a thing? [Both laugh] No, okay. So obviously, my husband's listening. So if I had to choose between him and my son, we know who it'd be! [JS Laughs] The third thing is, I would bring sunscreen! [Both laugh] I would bring sunscreen, a laptop, and a wifi connection.

[0:54:07]

JS: What is your favorite app on your phone?

[0:54:10]

FT: My favorite app on my phone is - oh gosh let's look at my phone right now. I would say, it's Seamless! [Laughs] Do you know what Seamless is?

[0:54:23]

JS: I haven't even used Seamless, no.

[0:54:25]

FT: Seamless, or maybe Uber. I would say Uber. This idea, this concept that I can like call a cab, especially living in New York City, that I can hail a car at any point. I can call someone a car who's at the airport, I can, you know, it's very convenient.

I love that I don't have to pull out cash or my credit card when I'm done with the ride, I can just get out say "thank you" and leave. And living where I live, in Brooklyn, not so isolated, but there aren't a ton of cabs everywhere so it's been very helpful in a pinch. So I will say that is my favorite app.

[0:54:55]

JS: And I know that Jeremy who's been rated 4.6 out of 7 who's driving a late model Honda Civic is gonna pick me up in about 3 and half minutes!

[0:55:03]

FT: There you go!

[0:55:04]

JS: Right. Last one, I have to ask a Stacking Benjamins question because we talk movies at the end of our shows. What's your favourite movie of all time?

[0:55:15]

FT: Edward Scissorhands!

[0:55:16]

JS: Really?

[0:55:19]

FT: I don't know why I love it so much? I just love it because I think it's such a sweet story and I love Johnny Depp, I love Edward Burton, I just - my brother and I are 11 years apart and when he was 7 and I was like 18 or even earlier, we would watch that movie constantly to the point where, I'm not embarrassed to say this, I knew every word in that movie! We would recite it to each other! We would do scenes. I could still probably recite scenes from that movie. I just, I love it!

[0:55:52]

JS: That's fantastic. Well thanks for having me do this. And man, this was fun!

[0:55:56]

FT: Oh my gosh! So much fun. A lot of it I didn't know what to expect, so that's why I love having you host it cause you weren't gonna just do my format, you were gonna bring in your own "je ne sais quoi". So thank you so much for that Joe! And everyone, please check out my podcast with Joe. It was episode, let me look here, I think it was 180.

[0:56:14]

JS: I'm a little disappointed though, I have to say, that I didn't make you cry.

[0:56:19]

FT: [Laughs] Well maybe you did and you just didn't see me crying? [JS Laughs] That's sort of the beauty of podcasting with only an audio aspect to it. Thank you so much Joe! And thanks to all my listeners for encouraging me to do this, and maybe I'll do this again some time with new answers.

[END]