

EPISODE 664

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:33.0]

FT: As we approach the end of the year I thought we'd like to hear from one of the country's top health and nutrition coaches and I say this is as I've just completed a slice of pizza, whatever, it was veggie. Lauren Slayton is here, she's the founder of Foodtrainers, a private nutritional counseling office in New York City. She's also the author of the popular book, *The Little Book of Thin*. Lauren is here talking about the financial lessons she learned from her mom. A feisty business woman in Manhattan who operated parking garages, that's hardcore. We also discussed the benefits – all the great benefits of saying no, just no. Why, it feels so good that and of course how to stay in our jeans over the holidays.

Here is Lauren Slayton.

[INTERVIEW]

FT: Lauren Slayton, welcome to So Money great to have you on the show.

[0:01:31.5]

LS: Hi Farnoosh, thank you for having me.

[0:01:32.1]

FT: It's wonderful to have you this time of year as we are winding things down and I call it the season of eating, it's a season of giving, it's a season of interacting and of eating. We just got out of the Thanksgiving holiday, it's middle of December now and we are approaching another holiday season and so to have someone who is the author of *The Little Book of Thin* and the founder of Foodtrainers it's really great to capture your advice for all of us. What's one thing that you like to tell your clients this time of the year?

[0:02:05.0]

LS: Well, I think first don't, you know, sort of avoid it at all cost waiting until the New Year's resolution to make your changes because I think even if you wait through a weekend or wait through a holiday or "I'll be good next week." Anytime we do that postponing we enable, you know, sort of craziness to ensue with our eating between, you know, the point until you get there so - and I think people are getting that. I think - I think clients instead of, you know, going silent during this month and, you know, checking back in with us in January, are now really trying to strategize, you know, "This time of the year is always terrible for me" or "Every time I go to a party I do this." So you can troubleshoot your month depending on what your obstacles are.

[0:02:49.5]

FT: Yeah, this is a good month to ease on to things I just, you know, after Thanksgiving now I'm on this, tell me if I'm crazy, but now I'm on this, kind of, a path where I'm trying just eat all natural whole foods. So like nuts and fruit and lean meats, not exactly Atkins because I'm having fruit and sugar but like I'm just trying to not eat something in a box or that came with packaging.

[0:03:17.2]

LS: There's no - you're not going to get a nutritionist that's going to argue with that I hope and I think this thing aside from not getting additives and, you know, coloring and things when you do eat the package food. What you're doing when you're eating whole foods is you're not getting overly stimulated so sweets and various starchy things they drive our desire for those things by design whereas natural foods don't necessarily do that to you.

[0:03:42.8]

FT: That is true, that is a good side effect is that you feel fuller aside from obviously from being a health expert Lauren. You are also a mom, you're an entrepreneur, you're a New Yorker, I can say that right? You've been living here for quite a longtime.

[0:03:55.9]

LS: Yes, forever.

[0:03:57.1]

FT: Forever. You have a great website and I – I'm obsessed with your blog and so I want to talk about a lot of things, I mean, maybe we could even start with your whole spin on health and nutrition and how you have designed your business around that. Can you share with us kind of like who is Lauren Slayton, the entrepreneur and the health expert?

[0:04:17.8]

LS: Yeah, well – before I open Foodtrainers which was 2001 we just turned 16, I was doing two things, I was in a obesity research at St. Lukes and I was doing nutrition for the Equinox Fitness Club so I had, you know, sort of both ends of the spectrum. I noticed that I had clients who would brag about their, you know, top trainer and were so proud to talk about the number of training sessions they had a week and then they would sneak in to my office like it was embarrassing.

They were seeing a nutritionist, you know, there must be something wrong with them and I just - I felt as if the whole process of seeing a nutritionist had to be redefined. It had to somehow be fun a lot seeing a trainer or great workout or something like that and not something that's closeted. So, that's literally where the word Foodtrainers came from. I also made the decision and social media definitely helps, that I really wanted to build a nutrition brand versus being Lauren Slayton. Maybe part of it is that I don't like all the attention and part of it was that I didn't really see that, you know, 16 years ago was a different time in wellness happening.

There were experts and I thought that – that, you know, sort of lent itself to being a different sort of experience rather than, you know, seeing someone in the hospital or seeing a therapist or something like that.

[0:05:48.4]

FT: Did you arrive at this world with your own set of health trip ups?

[0:05:53.5]

LS: I mean I think I arrived in this world with just being obsessed, not in a bad way, with nutrition I think when I realized nutrition could be a career. I was always in to sports and I come from my house where there's tons of cooking and really a pretty healthy relationship with food. But, I just love the idea that this could be a profession instead of a hobby.

[0:06:20.8]

FT: Let's talk about money, you know, through our conversation about money maybe we can learn more about your entrepreneurship and the way that you approach raising kids and leading your life. But let's start from the beginning when you were younger, what was the, sort of, relationship around money that your household exhibited?

[0:06:38.1]

LS: Yeah, I think even less so about money I think the example my mother was, sort of, my prime example when it came to money, which is good in itself that it was, you know, sort of a mother and not a father I think for a woman seeing that. But my grandfather died I was four years old and my mom was in her 30's and he gave one daughter his house, he left it, you know, sort of in his will and my mother got his business which was parking garages. So, here was my mother this, you know, sort of very feminine looking person running parking garages in lower Manhattan and for – I mean my earliest memories are her doing that so wasn't as if I remember that transition. But A she was given her piece of the, you know, puzzle, what she was bequeathed with, was not a sure thing.

She had to maintain this business and really work for but I also, you know, saw a mother being, you know, a badass for lack of a better word when it came to making money and running a

business and, you know, forget having any females around. There were just, you know, it was just a whole different world for her that she jumped in to.

[0:07:53.8]

FT: Wow, talk about being thrown in to entrepreneurship. Was she thankful? Did she just feel like “I got to make the best of this?” What was the example that she said in terms of how did she received this?

[0:08:06.3]

LS: Yeah, I mean my mom is a tough cookie so I don't – I don't even think we had a conversation about being, you know, sort of hesitant about it at all. I mean, she was coming from – she was a bridal buyer so she was coming from a different universe completely and run in to it but she was just, she was always the kind of person that could, you know, sort of Superwoman, in that she could work the inner garage, parking cars, or helping the men come home cook and there was just – there wasn't a complain. I think that she didn't grow up with a lot of money and the idea of having a business that could potentially generate some was always something that she was grateful for versus resenting it at all.

[0:08:53.1]

FT: Well, she was chosen after all to do this. Your grandfather could have picked his other daughter but maybe there was a reason why he chose your mom.

[0:09:02.3]

LS: Yes, the other daughters thinks there was a reason, we're leaving it at that.

[0:09:10.2]

FT: Yeah, so now how has this shaped the way that you think about work and money as a mother, as entrepreneur and as a woman?

[0:09:19.2]

LS: Yeah, I mean it's strange because certainly, I mean I grew up sort of in a comfortable situation but I definitely think because my mom was running her business there was always, you know, a little bit of not money worrying, more so of money pressure. But I think that for the most part instead of making me, you know, especially money conscious I think especially my early years I was never a spender but I never liked discussing money I never, you know, sort of enjoyed the topic I think because I associated it with stress.

[0:09:54.5]

FT: What stresses you out still about money is there anything?

[0:09:57.5]

LS: I just I mean I – we were joking in my office that I was doing financial podcast I mean we – I knock on wood have run a successful business but I'm have always been much more the ideas person than the spreadsheet person so it's, sort of, this, you know, happy accident that my business has run as well as it has and it's really a rather simple business when you look at it in terms of pieces of the puzzle. I really just need myself, a computer and a desk, so yeah. I think I've been, sort of, money averse for more time than I'd like to admit.

[0:10:36.4]

FT: Money averse, interesting from someone who runs a successful business, well tell us some of the secrets to how your business is successful? The simplicity sounds like that's one aspect.

[0:10:46.8]

LS: Yeah, and I think because of my outlook I never again, for better or for worse, I never entered an opportunity for the money, you know. I always knew that I needed to be, you know, I am married but I needed to be self-sufficient, I wanted to be self-sufficient. I wanted to be able

to travel and my kids to go to summer camp and things like that but, I was never, sort of, that's never how I made a decision, you know. Obviously I look at a contract and see if it makes sense according to time but it's never been what's driven me and I think that that's actually worked out well because there's always passion, there's always sort of a willingness to work as hard as I have to for whatever it is I'm doing at the time.

[0:11:29.8]

FT: You'd also mentioned to me prior to recording Lauren that you've gone better over the years at saying no, talk about that.

[0:11:37.3]

LS: Yeah, I mean I think that there are - I think a few things when it comes to my profession. I think that the world that we live in, just to give an example, is very, you know, media driven you do, you know, sort of excellent media work and I think that there was a sense I had that to be successful I needed not the fame but that it was, you know, good to be on TV or good to, you know, sort of do every article and I just - now that I've gotten older I realized, you know what I really love being behind my computer or in my office with a client or writing something more than I like necessarily, you know, sort of broadcasting it. So I of course will do something that's good for the brand in terms of television or something that's a little bit out of my wheelhouse but I'm much more selective.

I think I'm much more driven but I want to do versus what I feel is the right thing or the thing that indicates success.

[0:12:33.4]

FT: And so, when you're negotiating or thinking of negotiating with yourself, you know, "Should I do this, should I not, is it worth it, is it not?" How do you measure an opportunity? What are the things that come that are really important to you these days as someone who runs not just a business but a household?

[0:12:48.4]

LS: Yeah, I mean, I think it's time, you know, time is money but it's time away from my kids it could be, it's time away from my office. If it is something that's taking me on the road, etc and, it's incredibly unscientific but I think most of us get a gut response like, "Does this excite me, do I think this is going to end up being something that's worthwhile or that I'm proud of," etc. So, I'm sort of a fairly quick decision maker. I still have a sense of guilt when I say no, but I say no a lot more often.

[0:13:25.0]

FT: Yeah, and sometimes I feel like at this stage in your career and your life when you've accomplished a lot it's a reward to be able to exercise the power of no, more now than never and I have a friend who says "If it's not a hell yes, it's a no."

[0:13:39.4]

LS: I like that, that's a good one.

[0:13:42.6]

FT: Yeah, what's a money habit that you have Lauren? While as a health expert you have many good habits but when it comes to your financial regiment, do you have something that you practice daily or even once in a while but it's conscious?

[0:13:56.5]

LS: Yeah, I mean, I think that I mean first there's always outsourcing so, you know, a good accounting is really nice to have but I think that because it's not my, you know, favorite topic or my forte when it comes to finances and budgets and things of that nature. I really, you know, I do my accounting on a daily basis, in terms of tracking the clients that I see and the products that they purchased and I find it not postponing it which is, you know, something that I try to do

in general with other aspects of my life is the only way that, for me, bills don't pile up or I don't have a stack of billing to do from client files on my desk.

[0:14:38.1]

FT: Right, outsourcing is huge it's well worth the investment and later on I'll ask you about one thing that you spend on that makes your life easier or better, you can't say housekeeping because that's what everybody says so just prepare something different.

[0:14:50.8]

LS: Okay, I have to –

[0:14:52.2]

FT: Ahead of that though, what's the financial failure that you had experienced? It doesn't have to be recently and it doesn't have to be like a home foreclosure but something that goes in the category of, you know, not the best financial move.

[0:15:06.6]

LS: Yeah, I mean I think that less so fortunately than having like you said a complete financial meltdown like, two things that I've worked a little bit against me when it comes to certain projects are on one hand being more of an ideas person I am, you know, sort of an executer so my head is always spinning what we can do and this project and this topic for the blog etc.

But, putting those things into action and I think when it comes to actual projects being a little gone shy about investing in order to, sort of, capitalize on that return and I think there's been a couple of projects that were excellent ideas and I've seen other people be successful with them that I just didn't, you know, sort of go all in financially.

[0:15:54.6]

FT: Yeah, and then have you later measured how much that could have earned you?

[0:15:57.4]

LS: Yes, I mean I've seen, as I said, seen other people earn that, known in a sort of learn that lesson, you know, whether it's in investing in, you know, promoting a project or, you know, sort of on the front-end laying down the money. You know, now I'm more confident to do that but I think that I always sort of run the other way when I saw what I thought some things were involved.

[0:16:25.3]

FT: *The Little Book of Thin* is a book that you published a few years ago. That's pretty So Money. I love when people publish books it's always a great accomplishment and was it there something always was in your bucket list?

[0:16:38.3]

LS: It's so funny that I still think it's funny that I wrote a book and I want to write another one because I've always been, you know, in a math and science lane and I didn't even know until I think I was 35 that I like to write. So, I think that, you know, that's something that, you know, people should definitely experiment. But I definitely felt like as I develop the practice that A – I wanted a price point for people, you know, something that I can offer people that couldn't afford one on one sessions. I definitely love my savvy New York mainly clientele but I wanted to, sort of, have more reach and I just really fell in love with writing rather late in life.

[0:17:22.5]

FT: Yeah, the book is very much can be like you said a great way to get more people to get know what you do, get more visibility. Has it done that in the sense that it's got a new more "Out there" what have been some other ways that the book has helped you beyond your business.

[0:17:39.1]

LS: Yeah, I mean I think it's – I remember sitting with my therapist and she was like just know that, you know, a book doesn't make you money, you know, unless you're in a sort of a complete runaway bestseller and it – that was not, you know, sort of –

[0:17:53.5]

FT: Your therapist is wise.

[0:17:56.4]

LS: And has written books but so it was – that was never what it was so I sort of had - even though I really, you know, stand behind the book and I think that in my space it's different in many ways than what's out there. I underestimated, sort of, what it would do in terms of branding and, you know, just – I got an email this morning from someone who wants to do phone sessions in Sweden and it's just – it never gets old when I feel like somebody, you know, in a place that I've never been to is some – somehow fallen on, you know, my book.

[0:18:31.0]

FT: You're huge in Sweden that's awesome.

[0:18:32.7]

LS: It's really, it's really funny I get a kick out of like which languages the book has got translated in to and it's just, you know, we're in Poland and we're, you know, sort of all of these different places that I, you know, just didn't have in my head before, you know. I think in many ways my philosophy is very, you know, sort of and my voice is very New York based.

[0:18:55.4]

FT: Well, whenever I have a parent on the show who lives in the city in New York City and has children I have my money brain goes off to think and wants to ask how do you do it? How do

you raise grounded children in New York City where they have access to everything, they see such disparity also when it comes to wealth. They see people with gobs of money and then they see abject poverty just walking to the grocery store so how – what are the top conversations you're having about money in your household and be honest even if it's even if they are not easy ones?

[0:19:31.4]

LS: I mean, if we're talking honesty, my kids are in private school on the upper west side we get emails that people's drivers we do not have a driver I will say, except my husband but we get emails that the drivers are, you know, causing congestion, etc. So, I mean from very early on there was a, you know, normal people don't have their own planes and, you know, normal people take public transportation and do not have people driving them around, you know, we just it's not who we are so it was kind of easy to communicate that. I mean I have to say every weekend I think from the time my younger son was three maybe, three, four, we were just talking at this until recently because they are now teenagers we were in Vermont.

They were skiing, we were out of the city, we are all together in a car talking, we were, you know, sort of spending money only on what we were cooking for dinner. So, I think just having that outlet which of course I'm grateful for or that, you know, balance is important for us as adults but I think it's really important for them too, to sort of escape this crazy world.

[0:20:40.9]

FT: Yeah, so leave New York City.

[0:20:42.7]

LS: Yes.

[0:20:45.2]

FT: How do you keep grounded in New York City? You don't, you leave, you leave the city.

[0:20:46.8]

LS: I think you just have to like - so that, you know, kids can compare a lot and I think we – I've never been a competitive person I always felt, you know, very grateful, you know, all I would want to do with more money is travel and, you know. We're not very materialistic people but just to point out like how crazy certain things are rather than, you know, trying to keep up with the Joneses or anything like that.

[0:21:15.0]

FT: Right, I remember one parent telling me that they had to have a conversation with their eight or nine year old who went to school with another eight, nine year old whose dad run a media company and that not everybody flies private. I mean there is this thing called commercial and most people sit in economy so that was a unique conversation.

[0:21:40.6]

LS: But, I think that I really do – it's funny because, you know, like my worst nightmare would be to raise, you know, sort of two entitled spoiled brats and you mentioned in a certain conversations that you have. We haven't had over conversations other than I have one that's very, you know, sort of curious about the stock market and, you know, sort of what money they're spending and things of that nature but they like they totally just get it, you know. My son was apologizing to me that he was late for soccer practice and took a taxi when he should have taken the bus, you know. So I feel like it sounds so silly but I just feel like I'm glad that he realizes that even though he has the taxi app that, you know, that's not the most economical way to get some place.

[0:22:25.7]

FT: It's an important lesson to learn when you're young that, just because you have access to resources it doesn't mean you have to tap them.

[0:22:31.7]

LS: Absolutely.

[0:22:32.1]

FT: All the time and that they come at a cost. Alright, Lauren let's do some So Money fill in the blanks this is – I alluded to this earlier but this is when I start a sentence and then you finish it the first thing that comes to mind.

[0:22:43.1]

LS: Okay, got it.

[0:22:46.5]

FT: Okay, if I won the lottery tomorrow the first thing I would do is _____?

[0:22:49.5]

LS: Travel.

[0:22:53.4]

FT: Where would you go?

[0:22:53.6]

LS: I mean I went on Semester at Sea when I was in college and I would love to just go on like an epic around the world, slightly differently than I did as a student.

[0:23:03.8]

FT: Not with a bunch of twenty year old's on a crew ship.

[0:23:05.7]

LS: Yeah, not on a freighter maybe not with a backpack.

[0:23:11.7]

FT: A little nicer yeah, maybe not the hostels.

[0:23:14.3]

LS: Right.

[0:23:14.3]

FT: When I –

[0:23:18.4]

LS: Whatever I wanted.

[0:23:17.2]

FT: The one thing that I spend on that makes my life easier or better that isn't housekeeping is _____?

[0:23:25.2]

LS: It's similar to housekeeping but I would say childcare. I really, you know, and I don't even think it's childcare I think it's childcare and adultcare in our house but, you know, everyone says, you know, "I see your Instagram and, you know, you are with clients and then you're cooking dinner. How do you do it?" And I'm like, "I don't do it," you know, and I think that there's a really

interesting article, I forget where it was, in one of the papers about how in – on social media, etc. people or in their discussions, the nannies and babysitters are, you know, sort of people aren't admitting to it.

[0:23:59.3]

FT: Oh yes, I read that.

[0:24:01.4]

LS: It was really interesting I mean I've always, I've been that total opposite I feel like I would die without a nanny since my older son has been six months old she's been with us and she's just the calm in our crazy house.

[0:24:17.3]

FT: Well, I think there's one thing about, talking about those who help you with childcare, your nanny, your babysitters. Then there's like photographing them and putting it on Instagram which to the article's point, you know, people aren't doing that not because they're being dismissive or forgetful, or not appreciative. It's that they don't want their kids and their nanny's picture on Instagram for safety reasons which I can understand especially the higher profile people they were talking about that makes a lot of sense. But to your point I think that caregivers are not just – they don't just look after the child they look after the family and the more that we can appreciate them I think they deserve it. It's, it's totally an – you can't put a price tag on that.

[0:25:01.4]

LS: No, you can't put a price tag on that and it's really interesting what you just said because I do find, you know, Louisa's our beloved nanny and I don't even – I wish there was a better word for that. But every time I do post something about her and everyone and a lot of people in our world are familiar with her and, you know, have loved her for many years. People are very responsive and I think it's – I think there's just something about that relationship that needs to

be sort of discussed a little bit more or, you know, aside from privacy concerns just a little bit more real about.

[0:25:33.7]

FT: Right, I think it was, oh gosh, the famous actress not Tina Fey but her that, you know, they are like Amy Poehler, yeah, because they're always like two piece in a pad. So, Amy Poehler upon accepting I think it was an Emmy or a Golden Globe thanks her nanny on stage because that's honestly like she's like that's why I get to show up at work. Which is brilliant and true. Alright, when I splurge something that, some I might consider frivolous but to you it's everything when I splurge I like to splurge on ___?

[0:26:07.7]

LS: I mean it's something that we talked about a little earlier it's not a splurge but I definitely feel like, you know, I have an Uber habit that is just that as an adult I really do think that, you know, sort of enables me to get places and do things while I'm going I think that in terms of like an actual thing I spent money on I definitely think if you see my credit card statement that it's, you know, a hundred million percent food. I feel like it's a work expense even though it isn't but I really, you know, can like justify and crazy way spending anything on food.

[0:26:47.0]

FT: Well, it's good to know that you're not a crazy dieter, that you're not abstaining from food that you're indulging in it and not sparing an expense.

[0:26:56.0]

LS: Yeah, I think, that's I mean I think it's dieting a little bit but I think that's also a misconception about, you know, whether it's being on a certain nutrition plan or diet is that you, you know, sort of have to choose like, you know, the austerity lane or that you, you know, sort of have to feel uncomfortable in your clothing etc. I think that it's just nobody is willing to do that forever just, sort of, for go everything.

[0:26:56.0]

FT: Right, it's not sustainable, no. Okay, when I was growing up the one thing that I wish I had learned about money is ____?

[0:27:30.8]

LS: Anything. I mean I feel that, you know, I had a great education and but in terms of useful financial information, I mean I can't think of anything I learned in high school, elementary school, college, that had to do with useful money information.

[0:27:53.5]

FT: So, the answer is everything.

[0:27:55.4]

LS: Everything.

[0:27:55.5]

FT: The one thing I wish I learned, everything.

[0:27:55.5]

LS: Everything and anything.

[0:28:00.1]

FT: That's an honest answer and I think more people would say that because that's the truth. We don't learn about it enough growing up if we do it's by accident or it's through our own mistakes. When I donate I like to give to ____ because ____?

[0:28:15.7]

LS: I like to give to environmental charities because I'm terrified in terms of climate change.

[0:28:23.0]

FT: Living in New York what scares you, climate wise? Is there anything that like I mean obviously flooding to some extent.

[0:28:30.4]

LS: Yeah, I mean I think I only don't even think it's a New York thing I think it's just, you know, sort of look at the news, look at the storms, look at the oceans, I don't even feel it so much right in front of our faces but it's just, you know, thinking about my children's future and like not like actually having a planet.

[0:28:50.7]

FT: Right, okay, well, let's, let's, let's have something a little happier, this is our last fill in the blank I'm Lauren Slayton I'm So Money because ____?

[0:29:03.1]

LS: Because I haven't focused directly on that as the end goal.

[0:29:07.3]

FT: You've been doing what you love saying no when it matters and making some money along the way, come on you've been doing really well for yourself, you're a successful business woman.

[0:29:16.3]

LS: Yes, but a sort of by mistake but I also think I've you know, definitely, you know, definitely, you know, learned as I've gone and so I present myself as in a sort of financial idiot but, you know, really I'm focusing on what I need to focus on in terms of running a business.

[0:29:33.9]

FT: And, we can all appreciate that, thank you so much Lauren and wishing you a nice relaxing end to 2017 and thanks for helping us get our diet straight before the end of the year. We can approach the new year with some good habits and wishing you and your family continued success.

[0:29:51.8]

LS: You too and feel better.

[0:29:53.3]

FT: Oh, thank you. I know, I'm well stuffed up, thank you.

[END]