

EPISODE 829

“GH: I think that the best way for us to really move forward is to start with ourselves and really reevaluate our priorities and we can decide what we want to keep and what we don’t.”

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:50.3]

FT: Welcome to So Money, everyone. January 2nd, 2019. It’s my first time officially saying that year on this podcast. Welcome everybody. Hope you had a fun, relaxing, joyous New Year’s celebration and I’m really grateful that you’re here with us listening to this episode and subscribing to this podcast. It’s been an incredible run. This month marks the four year anniversary of So Money and I know many of you have been with us since the beginning and I’m just beside myself and so thankful and so appreciative of your support, your feedback, your everything. So just want to say that before we get started.

You just heard from Gemma Hartley who is our brilliant guest and author of the new book *Fed Up: Emotional Labor, Women, and the Way Forward*. Her book was inspired by an article that went viral, that she wrote for Harper’s Bazaar and it was called *Women Aren’t Nags, We’re Just Fed Up*. It was read more than two billion, with a b, times. Clearly, it struck a cord and it definitely resonated with me. You know, I feel like in my partnership with Tim, I just have it so good, you know? He gets it, I don’t have to nag him, so to speak. He’s really in there with all of the things; parenting and cleaning and house work and appointments for the kids and making the lunches and I really feel blessed that I don’t have to sort of micromanage my partner as I think a lot of women feel.

In any case, you know, we do also have our challenges and so I really wanted to bring Gemma on the show. I feel we could all take a page out of her book and in our conversation, she was very generous talking about her own life experiences too as a mother and as a wife. We discuss how she defines emotional labor in modern times. This is not necessarily a new concept. So what does she actually mean by emotional labor? Why are women often finding themselves

bearing the brunt of it and what is the way forward, as she says, to living a fuller and more satisfying life? How can we involve our partners more and to have healthier relationships?

Lots to unfold here. Here's Gemma Hartley.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:03:11.8]

FT: Gemma Hartley, welcome to So Money. Author of the great book *Fed Up: Emotional Labor, Women, and the Way Forward*. Thank you for writing this book. My god, what a voice you've given to our current generation and I think all of our mothers and grandmothers and women going all the way back to the dawn of time. Welcome.

[0:03:30.9]

GH: Thank you for having me.

[0:03:32.8]

FT: Your book is based on an article that you wrote for Harper's Bazaar that I actually read, got like two billion reads. I might have that number wrong, but I read the article and I wouldn't be surprised if it was more than that. Essentially, it was about emotional labor, right? Which is not a new phrase but I think that what you did so well in that article was bring it to modern time where now we have women who are working, a lot of women are breadwinners, we're in you know these households that feel very equal, qual partnerships. But yet the brunt of what you call the emotional labor falls on women.

Maybe we could start by just defining how you kind of have given this a modern twist, this emotional labor, what does it mean and how do we experience it exactly?

[0:04:28.0]

GH: So the way that I modernized it, I suppose, is the original term was, meant to apply to paid work and the emotional work that airline attendants did. So when I was talking about emotional labor, I had seen it shifting in like the common parlance of the last few years and it really was not just the emotional work but also the mental work and how the two intersect and compound and where I really saw that was in my personal life and in my friend's personal lives.

We were like the masterminds of everything that was going on and we were doing all of this behind the scenes work to make everyone happy and comfortable, planning the play dates, getting everyone together for the holidays, making sure that when we're asking or reminding our partners to do their share of the choices that we're not doing it in a nagging way and it was so exhausting. That's sort of how I brought it together, that mental work, that emotional work, and the ways that they intersect and compound and just exhaust us and frustrate us.

[0:05:36.5]

FT: It's so true and frustration, you said, was like the most common word that you heard in all of your interviews in researching this topic. Your book, *Fed Up*, you know, it's so thorough and really, it tackles how we got to this point and then how to shift the load. First with how we got here, I thought that something that you said was really jumped out at me was in some ways, oh gosh, kind of sad is that how we got here is that emotional labor for many women is a way to kind of control our lives in a world that feels limiting, right? That where our power is limited, feeling in control of our personal lives to the extent that we are making all of these things happen and trying to achieve perfectionism that it's sort of a silent resistance to what's happening in the broader world, which is that we're not being heard, we're not being given power and man, that put things in perspective for me and I found that quite sad but also, you know, I think because it's very real.

[0:06:46.0]

GH: Yeah, I definitely think so. I think that, you know, we have a world that does still limit our power and so a lot of our desire for control in some ways I think comes from the fact that we don't have power everywhere else. Of course, the control that we have is not benefiting us at all in the home and I think that throughout the book, I kind of unravel why it's such a bad mindset to

have, you know, if you're doing everything in regards to emotional labor that that sort of you know, the version of having it all that you want. You shouldn't want that, it's really not beneficial for us.

[0:07:27.3]

FT: Right, and we think we want it all but really, they're only maybe a few of those things within the all picture that will bring us happiness, you pulled in a lot of research from people like Gretchen Rubin and others who really focused on what makes people happy and it's not that you have a thousand things on your check list and you've mastered all of them. It's that, you know, taking a step back, thinking about what is important to you, what are the, with your partner especially, because this is supposed to be a shared effort, what are your shared values? And then kind of revisiting the load so to speak and figuring out what's worth it and what's not because the solution is not to just drop the ball, right? We've heard that before, which I can appreciate that. Just letting some things go, but some things are worth continuing to do.

[0:08:18.4]

GH: Yeah, I agree and there has been a lot of "let it go" talk over the last few years and I never found that really resonating with me because I don't want to let it all go. I just want to have a partner who is taking their equal share so that we can continue to do what makes us happy and you know, that we can have that set of shared values that we're both working towards.

I think that was the big issue, is that we were not both working towards the same goal. I was working towards the goal for everyone. That's what made it so frustrating.

[0:08:52.6]

FT: So how do we shift the load? You know, you open this article in Harper's Bazaar that you wrote called *Women Aren't Nags, We're Just Fed Up*, about your husband and it's Mother's Day and this is actually also an anecdote in the book that all you wanted was a house cleaning service. But really, it wasn't just the fact that you wanted your house cleaned, it was like, you were putting it off because it's like, you've got to research all the different possibilities of who

you're going to hire and, you know, then you have to interview them and then you have to negotiate the pay and it's all this emotional labor that you didn't want to do.

Your husband didn't quite understand that that was the more frustrating part. So there is this disconnect, right, in what is the problem? How do you ultimately communicate that and not come off as a nag?

[0:09:42.8]

GH: It took a lot of conversations. I thought that that one conversation that we had on Mother's Day where I, you know, having a straight up meltdown in the closet over gift wrap that wasn't put away. I thought that was going to be our "aha moment" and it wasn't. It's been a year now of conversations that we've been having and I think that's a big part of it is that we need to stop talking about it only when it builds up to this boiling point and make it a more normal conversation.

Another thing about those conversations is they sort of moved out of the personal. Like, "I am angry with you because you're leaving your socks on the floor," into look at the different ways that we were raised. Look at the culture and the expectations that has of me and you. That sort of took a big element of the blame out of it and we were sort of unlearning our habits together and that's really I think what has made a big difference.

[0:10:42.6]

FT: Some women have said that they can't even get their husbands to read your book, they don't even want to read the article that inspired the book. The patriarchy is still well and alive, how do you recommend those couples start a discussion or really move forward at all, move the needle?

[0:11:03.5]

GH: I mean, I usually recommend getting the book on tape and putting it on in your car on your commute. In all seriousness, I have told someone, "Here's the way to do it, just slip a CD in

there and it will be fine.” But I think it’s going to take some time. I think that the best way for us to really move forward is to start with ourselves and really reevaluate our priorities and we can decide what we want to keep and what we don’t.

It’s hard if you don’t have a partner, I think everyone should have a partner that they feel is taking an equal amount of the emotional labor. I think it’s so hard to try and give advice to someone who has a partner that says, “No, I don’t want to understand that part of your life. I don’t care about that. I don’t even believe that this is a thing.” That breaks my heart. But I think in those cases, the best thing that we can do is sort of set our own boundaries so that we’re not burning ourselves out for everyone else.

[0:12:08.0]

FT: My mom used to do this trick and maybe this is passive aggressive but it worked because she would always complain about like my father never appreciating the house being clean and the food being in the fridge and a home cooked meal every night and plus, she was working and they were very traditional. But she would just kind of boycott all these tasks for a little bit.

She’s like, “Let’s see how he feels when there’s no dinner on the table for a week or when I forget to do the laundry or you know, intentionally forget to do things.” That was a wakeup call for my dad. Like when she started going on business trips, that became a real wakeup call when she would come home, I feel like she’d say, “Well, you know, the bed got made, the laundry got done. He was still fed and, you know?”

I think the lesson there, maybe that’s not the advice is to be passive aggressive, but I think the truth is that we’re all capable human beings, right? Sometimes, I think I love the chapter on towards the end where you’re talking about really owning our worth because the things that we do, do matter and it’s not to undermine the fact that I want to wake up every morning and make sure the bed’s made and I hate that socks are on the ground. There is a reason for this and it creates order and happiness in our household. But to also own that and to not be shy and tell your partner like, “You know, this is important to us and this is valuable in case you didn’t notice.” But maybe don’t be passive aggressive about it. Or I don’t know, what do you think about that?

[0:13:44.4]

GH: I mean, I've done my fair share of passive aggressive phase in my days but I do not find it to be the best way to go about it. I think, really, like what helped was having less rough conversations because whenever we used to talk about emotional labor, it would be sort of a big blow up moment where I was feeling really overwhelmed and really angry.

By making it a more common thing that we were basically talking about all the time, which we did a lot of because I was writing the book on it. So it became less of a touchy subject. Now, it's so normal for us to be talking about it all the time.

[0:14:23.8]

FT: You won't believe this, or maybe you will. I was out an event recently, speaking to a room full of millennial women, professional, working women and the topic of motherhood came up. Most of them were not married yet, let alone had children and this, you know, the question was, "What should you look for in a partner if you're interested in being a woman who is going to be career focused and have a kid?" You know, partnership's really important to have somebody who supports your career goals and you don't have to feel like you have to opt out necessarily.

So one of the things I said you know, was to make sure that you find someone who has your values and it's not about necessarily the same political party or religion, but that really also mostly cares that you're somebody who gets to live up to your expectations. Live through your professional ambitions, changes diapers and believe it or not, some of the girls in the room were like, "I don't think my boyfriend's going to want to change diapers. My boyfriend's not really a baby person. He wants to be a dad but maybe he's," – and I know a lot of professional women who have kids and said, "My husband never changed a diaper." This is 2018. We have some work to do still in that department.

Do you think that we should let men off the hook who say they don't want to do those kinds of things? What are the fights worth having?

[0:15:55.1]

GH: I mean, I think everyone has their own fights that are worth having. But, oh my gosh, I can't imagine being the only one to change the diapers. I mean, it just blows my mind that that still happens and yet I know women who do have husbands who do not change diapers. It really just blows my mind but I think everyone has to pick their own battles, has to decide what is worthwhile.

But honestly, what I'm talking about in the book is sort of everything. Like I think that all of the emotional labor that women do, that we decide is important to us matters. I think it should matter to our partners. I think that is part of being in a loving equal relationship is that the things that matter to your partner should matter to you as well. It goes both ways and so you know, I don't think there's any part of a relationship that you should say, "Well, you know, I don't want to do that and I don't really care if it's important to you or not. I just, I don't feel like it," you know?

When it comes to changing a diaper, it's not that hard, you know? If it's something that's going to make a substantial difference in your relationship and in your partner feeling like their work is seen as a parent, as a mother and father like I can't overstate how important it is to make sure that your partner feels seen in the work that they do and I think the only way to do that is to share that work.

[0:17:31.6]

FT: Yeah, you say you have to reframe the emotional labor as a genderless virtue because so much of this, right? Has to come down to gender role expectations. In some cases in your anecdotes in your book, it's a faith based orientation, right? Like, "I'm the woman, this is what I do, this is my virtue. As a man, you provide." In some ways, this is not going away. These are hard things to reconcile.

[0:17:59.5]

GH: Oh yeah and we have been absorbing it in ways big and small throughout our whole lives. It is not that we don't even realize we're absorbing. You know, it took me a long time to come to

terms with, “Oh my gosh this is a thing that I am doing, and this is a reason that I am so exhausted and frustrated and resentful all the time,” and you know it is hard to change those deeply engrained beliefs and habits that we have.

[0:18:26.6]

FT: What’s an example? What is one of your favorite stories of a couple or maybe even from your own life of a situation that seemed impossible but there were some strategies, there were some conversations that took place that did move the needle and now the couple is in a happier place and most importantly she doesn’t feel fed up?

[0:18:47.8]

GH: Oh, you know, I have heard so many stories. It’s been really exciting since the book has actually been out in the world that I have been able to talk about it and I had I think my favorite one was I did an interview with a man who had read my book and he had just had his second child and he said that it completely changed the way that he felt about being a father and being a partner and that he was so actively looking for ways to take the load off of his wife during this postpartum time and I was like, “Gosh what a tremendous difference that must be making in your marriage. It fills me with so much hope,” and I know so many men who really this wasn’t on their radar before but once it’s there, they want to make that effort.

I know a lot of really good men that they don’t mean to put all the emotional labor on all of us. A lot of the book is just talking about how the imbalance came to be is that we didn’t realize that was there, we hadn’t been talking about it. We really didn’t have a language for it and now that there is, I think there is so much hope for change.

[0:20:02.4]

FT: That is so true. It is similar to the conclusion that I came to in my book recently about female bread winners because yeah, there’s the same thing. A lot of resentment can brew in a relationship where there is just two different mindsets around say, the value of — in my book, the value of providing money in the relationship and the truth is, the good news I think for

women just like in your case with your audience is that your partners wants to help you. Your partner wants to be your biggest advocate, your greatest supporter and so that's a real opportunity for women to engage them, to be honest with them, to share in whatever you're reading that is helping you that that can also help the relationship and to not be afraid to have those conversations.

I think that you said it right, you know, that we didn't have a language for this and now we do. We have your book. We have all of these stories and all of these anecdotes that we can use as ice breakers to get the conversation going. So I think that's definitely a positive out of all of this that can seem sometimes very challenging.

Shifting gears to money a little bit, Gemma, I know you talked earlier about how it's important that we don't become the person in the relationship that's like, "I'm not just good at that." Like, "I am not ever going to do diapers. I am not a baby person," and I think with money too, women sometimes feel like, "That is not my domain. I am not good with numbers. He brings home the paycheck, he can manage the money."

In your own life, where do you feel you fall on that scale in terms of feeling like having ownership over your money in your relationship?

[0:21:50.5]

GH: So I fall on the absolute polar opposite of the norm. I grew up in a household where my mom was the one who did all the budgeting and was really in control of the finances and when I entered my own marriage, I have always been the one to do the budget and to really have the large bulk of control over our budget and I have had to start to give up a little bit of that control because it was a little bit too much and that's from my husband's perspective.

He felt like he had no idea what was going on with our money almost all of the time. He just knew that I was taking care of it and as we were yelling and getting started, we paid off like \$35,000 worth of debt after we got out of college and I have kept the finances very, very controlled and I am starting to learn to give up the control a little bit.

[0:22:53.8]

FT: It is interesting you said that you learned from your mom the importance of being active and mindful of the money because at the same time, you wrote an article for the Washington Post that said, “Like my mother, I put my dreams on hold to raise kids but I didn’t have to.”

I’d love for you to talk a little bit about that and the influences that your mom’s role growing up as a kid, the modeling that she did for you and how that in other ways manifested in your life as a grown woman.

[0:23:22.4]

GH: Yeah. So in that article, I was really talking about my mother just recently graduated a few years ago from college and it was amazing to see her go through that process as an adult and knowing the amount of work that that is because she had spent all of my formative years and my brothers, she waited until we were both over 18 to really chase that down and I always I guess thought that motherhood was supposed to be that first thing in my life and I was supposed to put other things on hold until later and I’ve obviously not done that because my kids are three, five and eight and I’ve just written my first book and you know watching her fulfill her dreams really put me on this path in a really big way.

I saw her fulfilling her dreams and I hated how long that it had took her to really step into that and so I decided I was going to really go after my own dreams and I would do it while my kids are young so that they could see that because that was such a powerful moment for me even as an adult to watch her get her diploma and so I was like, “Well, I want my kids to grow up watching me chase after my dreams and for them to know that parenthood is not something that is meant to hold them back. It is part of the dream.”

[0:24:56.7]

FT: You say in your book, talking about children and if we want to create this change in our lives when it comes to the emotional labor and how to keep the progress going, for your kids it is

really important to teach sons to learn to carry their own weight and our daughters to learn not to carry others.

[0:25:19.1]

GH: Yeah, I think that is huge. I mean, you know, we send these very subtle signals to our kids and I think a big part of it is that we need to model that behavior in our own relationships. I think that is the number one thing because they are constantly absorbing the gender roles that they are seeing inside their home and so they need to learn that everyone does their part and I have seen a huge shift in my kid's behaviors and the way that they talk about when they're grownups now.

Since the beginning back before I was writing this book, you know I wrote about how my son would expect a lot of praise when he cleaned his room and my daughter would just do it because that is what they us doing. They saw that my husband would come home and be like, "Look at how clean this kitchen that I did," and I am like, "I cleaned the kitchen like 10 times today," you know?

[0:26:14.5]

FT: You know I think we're so progressive as a society. I love in Brooklyn, which is a super bubble here with so much liberalism and I love living here but it is frustrating too because even here, if I go out with my kids and I am multi-tasking and being super mom, it's just normal. I don't get any congratulations or, "Awe!"

But my husband goes out with the two kids and he's grocery shopping with them or whatever, he could just be walking with them. He'll get stopped or he'll notice that people are even stopping to say, "Oh your kids are so cute," and it just seems like an outlier and that is part of it too, right? Is that we think we're so progressive and in some ways we are as a society but we're so still stuck in old traditions and the expectations too that society has of men and women have remained pretty stagnant in terms of progress.

So we have a lot of head wins but it is so nice to know that change can start at home and it's the New Year, so I just wanted to shift gears quickly, really quick. Our sponsor is Chase Slate and we're asking guest this month, what is your financial resolution, Gemma, this year?

[0:27:37.0]

GH: Oh, my financial resolution is to really get on top of my taxes. Because I was not as I am top of it as I should have been in 2018 and so this year, I am going to be much more on top of it. I think a big part of it had to do with writing a book and shifting from freelance to that and figuring out what it looks like. So hopefully in this year, I'll have a better grasp of it and stay on top of it more.

[0:28:03.9]

FT: Just outsource it.

[0:28:06.2]

GH: Yes, oh my gosh, yes.

[0:28:08.5]

FT: I mean, be on top of it but also get, you know, I always say like with especially when it comes to taxes, that is the one area at least in my life that where I don't want to do any guessing.

[0:28:17.8]

GH: Oh no, I don't. I have an accountant but still, I don't want to have to go back to my accountant like three times because I am missing all of this stuff. I don't want to do that again.

[0:28:26.7]

FT: That is a good point. Yeah, that will actually end up costing you more money in the end. So what's one thing and maybe too soon to tell but I always like to ask authors especially when they right such big important books that captured the zeitgeist of what's going on in the world, what do you think is the next message that has been maybe born out of the conversations you've been having from this book, what is one area that still is going unresolved? What is a new problem that you're learning about, what area of interest that you would like to explore because you wrote this book first?

[0:29:04.3]

GH: So I think one of the things that really came out of this book was there were so many women asking me, "But like, how do I explain this in a way that my husband understands?" and there was this big desire for us to just over explain ourselves so that everyone understands the minutia of our lives and part of me thinks that we probably don't need to explain as much as we currently do. I think we need to start living our lives in a way that allows our truth to show without people expecting us to break it down for them into such an easy, digestible little nugget of truth.

So I think that is the next thing that I am really interested in, why we tend to over explain ourselves and why we can't just let our truth be.

[0:29:57.0]

FT: Be the example, be the change you want to see in the world. But I also I think a glossary could help.

[0:30:06.5]

GH: Yes, I like those.

[0:30:08.5]

FT: Or like an urban dictionary, right?

[0:30:10.3]

GH: Yes and urban dictionary of women lives.

[0:30:13.8]

FT: Yeah and how to articulate like that where you can communicate that to a man and he'll totally get it like putting in his words but you are getting your point across too.

[0:30:22.5]

GH: Yeah and also I think higher expectations for men. A big part of this book was there is a lot of infantilizing around men in doing emotional labor and I think there is the same thing going on when we want to over explain things. They are capable adults, especially if they are our partners, I certainly hope you did not bring another child into your household. We should have better expectations of men and I think they will rise to the occasion.

[0:30:50.3]

FT: I'll never forget one of my friends, we were talking about this topic as women do when they are without their husbands and she was like, "My husband runs a team of 25 people at work, he is extremely good at his job, he makes a lot of money, you don't think he can put a load of laundry in once in a while? That is not beneath him. It is also not something that he's unable to do. It should be a no brainer."

[0:31:19.1]

GH: I think we've got this big culture of, "Oh he can never do what you do" I am like, "Well you know he could" just give him a chance. He is a grown man, he can figure it out, yeah.

[0:31:29.6]

FT: Right, exactly. Let's do some So Money fill in the blanks. Are you familiar with this Gemma? It's okay if you are not. It's nothing crazy. It is just that I start a sentence and then you finish it.

[0:31:41.8]

GH: Oh okay.

[0:31:42.9]

FT: Like mad libs, but for money.

[0:31:44.6]

GH: Yeah, this is stressful.

[0:31:46.6]

FT: Oh no, sorry well not to put more emotional labor on your plate. If I won the lottery tomorrow, the first thing I would do is ____.

[0:31:54.8]

GH: Buy a plane ticket to England for my whole family and go see my mom's family in England.

[0:32:02.0]

FT: Oh is that where your mom lives now or you were raised in the UK?

[0:32:06.0]

GH: No, I was raised here. My mom came over as a nanny and met my dad and I have lived my whole life on the west coast. But yeah, her whole family is there. She's one of six children and so I got a lot of family there and I would love to see them.

[0:32:22.7]

FT: Wonderful. Okay, one thing that I spend on that makes my life easier or better is _____.

[0:32:30.1]

GH: Oh, yoga. I think yoga is the one thing that I spend money on that makes my life infinitely easier.

[0:32:39.5]

FT: We didn't even touched on this, but I think it's also so important for women especially women who feel fed up to be unapologetic about self-care.

[0:32:48.2]

GH: Oh yeah, I'm totally unapologetic about taking the time that I need and you know I encourage my husband to do the same. We both need to take care of ourselves to be at our best.

[0:32:59.2]

FT: Yeah. All right one thing that I splurge on like I am talking big bucks, maybe not all the time but this is something that you unapologetically spend money on and it's expensive is _____.

[0:33:10.4]

GH: Travel. When I travel I like to go out at least one really nice meal no matter where I go and so that is the one thing that I will splurge on.

[0:33:23.3]

FT: Yeah, I just came back from LA. It is very easy to splurge on food out there.

[0:33:28.6]

GH: Yeah.

[0:33:29.1]

FT: As it is in New York, and duh and you're in Nevada, in Reno right?

[0:33:35.0]

GH: Yes, yeah we've got a lot of really nice restaurants in our mid-town area so you know, occasionally me and my husband will go out and splurge on a really nice meal down there.

[0:33:45.0]

FT: Nice. When I donate, I like to give to ____ because ____.

[0:33:50.0]

GH: I like to give to Together Rising because they put all of the money towards the cause and they are so thorough about the work that they're doing.

[0:34:03.2]

FT: I love them too. I donated this year. You had mentioned about your mom modelling really good financial behavior, but I always ask this in the fill in the blanks too, which is one thing I wish I had learned about money growing up is ____.

[0:34:21.1]

GH: Oh, I feel like I got really good money lessons when I was growing up. I didn't make a whole lot of mistakes in my early life. So I think I learned everything that I would have wanted my kids to learn growing up. So I am very lucky.

[0:34:42.9]

FT: Yeah. Hey, it does happen.

[0:34:45.6]

GH: It happens. It's rare, but it happens.

[0:34:48.3]

FT: And last but not the least, I am Gemma Hartley, I am So Money because _____.

[0:34:53.2]

GH: I am So Money because I take care of myself.

[0:34:59.2]

FT: I love that. Gemma, really thank you for writing this book. I remember when your Harper's Bazaar article came out and I am really happy to know that it lead to this book in a really important conversation and I am looking forward to the follow up and I wish you and your family an easier 2019, one that is good to you and to your family and to your husband. We can learn a lot from *Fed Up* and thank you for writing it.

[0:35:26.3]

GH: Yeah, thank you so much for having me and for reading it.

[END]

