

**EPISODE 1012**

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[INTRODUCTION]

**[0:01:07.3]**

**FT:** Too often, we think of motherhood as penalizing our careers. My guest today is leading a movement to turn motherhood into a professional advantage. Welcome to So Money, everybody. I'm your host, Farnoosh Torabi. Having a child changes you. For Kari Clark, it really changed her. After having two kids, she made a significant career shift. Saw improved performance reviews, lost 45 pounds, learned how to do a cartwheel and gave away half of her possessions. Talk about progress.

She turned being a mom into a career advantage and realized she wanted to and could help other women do the same. She launched her startup called Uplift. You can check it out at [upliftparents.com](http://upliftparents.com), where she's helping to increase working mom productivity, decrease burnout and just enhance overall well-being. I'm up for that. Here's Kari Clark.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:02:02.1]**

**FT:** Kari Clark, welcome to So Money.

**[0:02:04.5]**

**KC:** Yeah, I'm glad to be here.

**[0:02:05.9]**

**FT:** Uplift is the website that you created, really a community and a movement. So helpful to so many of our listeners who are parents out there, trying to avoid things like burnout and insecurity and feeling some days that you just can't. You just can't. You can't manage and I know that you and I are really in the thick of things with two kids, ages five and three.

You started Uplift as an online coaching platform that empowers working women to turn motherhood into a career advantage. Not what most people assume motherhood to be. A lot of people see this as unfortunately, a setback, at the very best, maybe a pause. How is it a career advantage?

**[0:02:48.5]**

**KC:** I mean, there's a number of studies that scientifically show that when you have a kid, your brain gets rewired to be more creative. There's that. Then also, every time you have a major life change, this is if you switch jobs, if you move to a new city, have a kid. This is a great time to adopt new habits, right? Because everything is changing in your life and I mean, parenthood is a complete change. All of a sudden, you get to rewrite the script of what that is. We think it's a huge opportunity to make some positive changes within your life.

Then my own personal experience and I've also interviewed over a 150 moms who are at the top of their field and heard this over and over again, is that "I just became on paper, much better at my job. I became ruthlessly efficient. I leaned into work that really mattered to me, because if I was going to leave my child, I wanted to do things that really mattered and that helped me bring such a different level of work to my work."

Then finally, I honestly stopped caring about the BS. I used to worry about things that I look back and it was just a waste of time, right? All of a sudden, I just became just that much better and more impactful at my job.

**[0:04:08.1]**

**FT:** I like to go even a step further and say that when you become a parent, if you do actually find that all of what you say to be true, which I completely believe to be true and I've heard this from a lot of my friends and other moms too. Another thing can happen, which is that you can actually boost your financial potential. You can earn more money. That also seems counterintuitive to everything we hear about becoming a mom, which is that you have to slow down, you might work less, you have to go to part-time, you can't be as aggressive with your career. Have you found that in your community as well as another cherry on top, is that you get to maybe also boost your earning's potential? Because you're now more productive, because you're focusing on the more important stuff, that stuff that really you care about.

**[0:04:52.0]**

**KC:** I think there's a double-edged sword. Yes, I think you do become more productive. One of the things that we have to deal with with society is that the number one bias in the workforce is maternal bias. Bias against moms. A man becomes a dad. He's actually viewed as more committed to the organization and more responsible. A woman becomes a mom and she's viewed as taking a step back and having one foot out the door.

In fact, if you look at the stats, a 30-year-old man, if you compare to what he earns to a 30-year-old woman who doesn't have kids, she earns about 90%. When you add in kids with that same age group, she earned 60% of that man. There's a lot that you can do to combat that bias, but it's something you have to be aware of going in. One of the reasons that it's an insanely insidious is that maternal bias is people think that they're doing the moms a favor.

I worked with a manager once who she was a mom herself, she was involved in the women's group. A woman came back on her team and she said, "Oh, I don't want to give her this project, because there's too much travel and that'll be hard on her." Ultimately, that should have been the decision of that mom herself. I think a big part is how do you manage that within your own career? One of the things that we do at Uplift is really empower them, the moms and say, "You

need to proactively talk to your management chain to tell them that you want every single opportunity to come aboard, and so that you can make that decision on your career.”

I do think that there is this potential. I see it happen over and over again with women whose career skyrocketed. I mean, I looked at just what happened with me and my career, my earning potential drastically increased after I had kids and I made a huge career impact on that. You have to also make sure that you're correctively navigating this new bias that you're having to deal with.

**[0:07:04.7]**

**FT:** That's a great point. Sometimes we shoot ourselves in the foot. We assume that there is this bias at work, when maybe there isn't. We perpetuate it by not talking about our family responsibilities to colleagues, or trying to hide the fact that we're – everything's okay on the home front, but really maybe you do need to work from home one day a week. I think we should give ourselves permission to talk about these things, because the reality is we're bringing all of that to the workplace and the men are too.

I just don't think it's healthy to compartmentalize so much. We have to understand that family dynamics are changing. I find that with female breadwinners at the workplace who have children at home, the bias at work is that, “Well, she's not the breadwinner, so maybe we're not going to give her the raise, because she doesn't “need it as much.”” Guess what? She does, just as much as the guy next to her.

We have this expectation that men are providers in their families first and foremost. They're the ones usually that are up for those bigger paychecks, bigger promotions. It's unbiased conscious sometimes, but that's what's happening because we're not talking about these things.

**[0:08:12.9]**

**KC:** The crazy thing that I'm seeing just in our coaching, because coaching is a big part of what we do at Uplift is that we're seeing more and more women who are not only a working mom, but are also the primary breadwinner for their family. That is this perfect storm of all of a sudden,

you have all the expectations of what a traditional man would have as being a breadwinner, plus all those expectations around being a mom. It's hard, right? We're seeing that over and over and over again. I totally agree with you.

**[0:08:49.7]**

**FT:** I just took a survey on your website at [upliftparents.com](http://upliftparents.com). I discovered through your survey, which is very helpful, because I just want to share this with listeners. You have this community, but also to get to know your communities a little bit better and to give back, you have this survey that asks you a little bit about various levels of your burnout, if it exists, and your current situation, how many kids you have, what age, if you run your own business, how would you describe yourself in certain scenarios. Do you want more time with your friends? Do you get enough time with your partner?

I took the survey and I was maybe not surprised, but I guess it was – it was characterized in such a cool way. I view my results and it said that I am a prevention goddess. It says, “You've been fortified by the boundaries you've established and you're able to handle a lot of what life throws at you, until it catches you off guard.” Then you go on to give me some advice on how to prevent meltdowns, which I have been telling my kids. I'm like, “Mommy's going to have a meltdown.” Tell me a little bit about this study, the survey rather and all the different characterizations you've developed and what you have discovered about moms, working moms.

**[0:10:05.2]**

**KC:** Yeah. We launched this. We call it ‘The Working Mom Checkup’ last week. We did that, because in all of our research, we found that just taking a time to pause and reflect on what's going on in your life has the most impact, right? Because it's when you do that, then you can start making changes.

We looked at what was the number one problem we were seeing with moms. It was really around burnout. That's what this checkup does is really help you determine first, are you burnt out or not? We have that area to look at. Then we view, what is your risk for future burnout? We

look at two dimensions. We look at prevention and coping. Are you good at preventing burnouts, of saying no, making sure that different parts of your life don't bleed together.

Then are you good once things have come through and all of a sudden your plate is overwhelmed, at just coping with that. That's stress management techniques. It's really having a group of friends that you can turn to. Taking time for yourself. What we do is we help moms characterize where they are. I'm an overdriven all-star, which means I'm actually really great at prevention and coping. I still though have too much on my plate. I'm burnt out.

What we do then is give you tips custom for you on how to up your game in those different parts. We hope that it really helps you just reflect and take away a couple of really small changes that you can make that can have a big impact.

**[0:11:43.2]**

**FT:** Speaking of those changes, one of those changes for me was to have gratitude checks. Whenever I experienced something good during the day, make a check mark on my phone, on a piece of paper. I love that. I have a friend on Twitter that always does the #OneGoodThing that she experienced that day, because she's also got a stressful life and it's a nice reminder to stop and smell the roses.

Then you also recommend a micro self-care routine, whether that's smiling for 60 seconds, or maybe going on YouTube and watching your favorite comedian or something, just frivolous, but can make you smile and can get you energized. Oh, and locking the bathroom door. I've done that. My husband and I both do that.

**[0:12:32.3]**

**KC:** Yes. That is one of my number one pieces of self-care. We all deserve to be in peace.

**[0:12:38.2]**

**FT:** Yeah, we're all allowed to do that, including the kids. I say, I call it asking for privacy. My daughter will say – my daughter's potty-trained almost and I'm just going to be like, “Do you need privacy?” “Yes.” Privacy is a big word in our house. Then the third thing you say is the one-minute rule. This is for me, because I may – what was it? The something goddess?

**[0:12:58.1]**

**KC:** Prevention goddess.

**[0:12:58.7]**

**FT:** Prevention goddess. I am. I'm such a planner. For me, it's important to take in some of the small rituals and really relish in that, whether that's replying to that low-hanging fruit easy e-mail. It's a quick win. Hanging up the coat. You know what I do in the morning is I make my bed. Do something that takes less than a minute, or you can do ASAP that feels really accomplished-worthy and success in some way. I feel I'm already doing these things, but not really recognizing the benefits.

**[0:13:31.6]**

**KC:** Yeah. It's amazing when you start looking at it. When you start noticing this in your life, you'll notice a few other things that you can add to that one-minute rule. The gratitude checks though is great. I also recommend doing that with your kids. Get them to make a little mark on their hand. Then when you're putting them to bed, you can ask them to replay what each of the check marks were on their hand for what they were grateful for the day. Then all of a sudden, you also have a gratitude practice that you're sharing with your kids.

**[0:14:02.6]**

**FT:** Kari, I would love to learn more about your background. I know that you worked at Google for many years in marketing and product management. Then you have your MBA from Kellogg, you went to Columbia, you were at the Coaches Training Institute. Tell me a little bit about your perspectives on parenthood before you became a parent. What were some of the things about

working parenthood that you maybe had some assumptions going in that completely were different once you were in it? Good or bad.

**[0:14:34.6]**

**KC:** Yeah. I mean, I was one of those people who thought when you became a parent, your career was somewhat over. I think that is literally how I went into it. I knew I wanted to be a parent. I had kids. I thought I would take some type of step back. I was personally very shocked when I felt I was more motivated to achieve than ever. It was really, really hard. Like you said, I was at Google when I had my kids. On paper, Google has pretty much every benefit you could imagine for moms. It was still hard for me.

I remember crying in the conference room quite often. I felt I was reinventing the wheel and I knew there had to be a better way for me and the other countless other ambitious moms like me. There was a couple of things. One, I realized if there were – if I was struggling this much with the amount of support that Google had, other women must be struggling as well, if not more.

The second piece is I started just dissecting it a little bit and realized that most companies treated supporting working moms in a really one-dimensional way. They really thought about it as a logistical problem. If we gave them enough backup childcare, or enough pumping support, their lives would be great as a working mom. Those things are incredibly helpful. When I looked at my life and where I started talking to hundreds of other moms, I realized what the main struggle was was really about the emotional pressure.

Over half of working moms are guilty every single day. Less than 20% of working moms when they come back from leave feel confident and they're in their work. If you feel that way, you're not going to show up in the way that you need to to be really, really successful. I realized, I wanted to create Uplift and we really help moms tackle some of those emotional pressures and really help up their mental game.

We do that through a combination of digital activities that you do in an app. Then you have coaching sessions, either one-on-one or with a group on those different activities. We found that



that coaching was so key, because it helped moms prioritize themselves, it helps them go deeper and really tackle some of these big, juicy problems that make being a working mom much easier once you solve.

**[0:17:19.4]**

**FT:** What about the financial complexities, affording children, affording your career while you pay for childcare, or affording childcare while you pursue your career? I'm sure that comes up a lot in your community. I'm just curious if there are any different kinds of solutions we haven't covered yet.

**[0:17:36.9]**

**KC:** I mean, it's a huge thing, right? I mean, there's just plain childcare. Then there's also the amount of outsourcing that could be helpful and beneficial to your career. One thing I like to tell people is that your kids are only young for a short period of time. Don't always think that – don't always look at the financial situation right now and make decisions that affect your entire career.

For example, some moms are like, “Well, I if I go back to work, I'm basically almost at a net for paying for childcare.” In the reality, you're only going to have to pay for that type of childcare for a couple of years before they might get into a public school system. You might be sacrificing a huge amount of income in the future for a smaller, for this right now.

Then secondly, you're making investments in yourself. There are opportunities and we encourage moms if they like outsourcing, to look at would getting an extra babysitter or extra help help me be able to spend more time, either with my kids enjoying them so I feel more full? Or at work making a bigger impact, that'll have a bigger impact in my salary long-term? What we try to encourage is don't only look at what's going on in your finances right now when you're making these decisions.

**[0:19:15.3]**

**FT:** Yeah. I encourage people to think of this as an investment. Childcare as an investment, where yes, the benefits today may not be there financially. You're like, "How can I rationalize this? It's so expensive." It's hard to look at it today and say, "Yes, this is clearly going to pay off." No, it might not pay off for five years later down the road, but it is – I think we need to shift our mindset around this to more of an investment in our families, in our careers and everything.

**[0:19:46.1]**

**KC:** I totally agree. What people don't realize is it's actually very hard once you take a step back from the workforce, to get back in at that same level that you are. I've seen mom struggle with this. The more senior you were went before you left, the harder it is. Just thinking about that decision in not just where you are right now, but where you want to be in five to 10 years, you need to think about the full picture.

**[0:20:20.2]**

**FT:** I talk to a lot of working moms too. I'm curious if this is echoed in your community that when your children are younger, it's a hard time to be away from them and to imagine going back to work sometimes. There's that emotional attachment of obviously for many parents. It's the thing where you have to also remember, when they're older, that's when you in some cases, one could argue, they need you more. To be able to invest more in your career now when they're young, so that you can lay the foundation for when they are 11, 12-years-old, 10-years-old and they really have those tough questions and they need you there for moral support and everything that having more flexibility and seniority in your career at that point is going to pay off with dividends, because now you can call more shots in your career and be there for your family when they really need you.

**[0:21:08.0]**

**KC:** Yeah. Also, it's when they really need you and when it's the most fun. I'm sure, you're starting to see this glimpse also with your family. My daughter just turned six recently. We have such a different relationship now that she has gotten older. We actually just went a couple weekends ago and spent the weekend, just the two of us to Paris. I think that I am entering. I

think there's a sweet spot of parenting between around six and probably 11, or 12 before they become teenagers, where life is that's why you become a parent, because you have these magical moments.

Yes, they need you when you're really young, but you want to make sure that you're setting yourself up to be able to really enjoy those magical times. Then also be there, like you're saying when it gets really hard.

**[0:22:14.4]**

**FT:** Right. When I talk to friends about their relationships with their parents, they don't remember when they were three, but they remember coming home every day when they were in fourth grade, fifth grade and having a parent to help them with their homework, or having those family dinners and having their parents show up at their school events. That's later on in their adolescence, just things to keep in mind. There are going to be so many more opportunities for you to be way more present, because you've earned it too, because you've put in the hours and the time when they were babies.

**[0:22:50.5]**

**KC:** I interviewed over a 150 moms who were at the top of their field. I also interviewed a number of their kids who were adults, for the ones that are empty nesters at the time. That was fascinating, because the adult kids talked about how meaningful it was to have a parent that they could connect with on work issues, that could come to for mentoring advice, that they can learn from on the business side. Also, thinking about how do you support your kids throughout their entire life, because their needs are going to change. It was really magical, where it was such a fulfilling thing to hear how much these kids appreciated that their moms worked.

**[0:23:43.6]**

**FT:** I know that much of Uplift parents is dedicated to moms. What is the role of dads and this movement, do you think? How can partnership be part of the solution?

**[0:23:54.9]**

**KC:** We focus on moms, just because we looked at the largest, where was the largest problem and how do we wanted to focus on that and solve that first. We've done a lot of work with dads. In fact, a couple of our activities that are key to our program, you do as a couple if you have a partner.

One of those is dividing up household tasks. I know you had Eve Rodsky on your podcast earlier. She's great, a friend. Something along those lines of how do we make sure that everyone is completely owning their different pieces and that all of the mental load doesn't fall on the mom? Another activity that we really encourage is creation of family values, and that's something you do as a partner, as a partnership, in which you go through and determine what do you want your family to stand for? Just like you would have company values, or personal values, what do you want your family to stand for?

We find that coming up with that as a partner is amazing, because all of a sudden, you have a language to talk about as a family about what matters and what doesn't matter. We found that to be really helpful. For example, independence is a very big value for my family and how we raise our kids is very much influenced by that. I think, actually getting on that same page with your partner helps make parenting be something that's not just done by the mom, or not just – but it's actually done as a group and it's done very consciously and intentionally.

**[0:25:41.2]**

**FT:** I'm signing up for your daily tips right now. I'm serious. Your community has completely sucked me in. I think it will be for the better. Kari, thank you so much. Tell us a little bit more about what we can look forward to from the community? I'm hoping everyone is running to Uplift Parents. If there's anything on the horizon this year that might be worth mentioning, we'd love to know as much as possible.

**[0:26:04.1]**

**KC:** I mean, right now our focus is just getting as many people as possible to take the checkup. Part of that is we want to provide great tips for moms like you. The other part of it is we want to learn more about moms. We want to use that data to help make change that's more systemic within companies, within just society. I think what we're seeing now is getting some of that information, so we can start learning about what exactly is going on with moms that we can make those changes.

**[0:26:39.7]**

**FT:** I love it. It's true. Right on your website, it says, "90% of mothers feel stress." Yikes. Got to change that quotient.

**[0:26:46.8]**

**KC:** Yeah, it's crazy. I think we can do – I mean, the cool thing that we really believe is that small, little changes can make a huge difference. Those tips that we have, they make a big, big difference in people's lives.

**[0:26:59.3]**

**FT:** Kari, thank you so much. I know I'm going to be talking to some more this year, because I feel you see me. You hear me and you see me.

**[0:27:10.2]**

**KC:** Thank you. Well, we're in it together, right?.

**[0:27:13.1]**

**FT:** Yeah, absolutely.

**[END]**