

# **Know Yourself**

**July 2015**

**Live :: Creating a life you love.**

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## Welcome

This month, we're talking about knowing and understanding yourself—your personality, your natural inclinations, your motivations, and what makes you tick.

Anne Bogel from [Modern Mrs. Darcy](#) is joining us to talk about why and how to begin this self-reflection, with details about the most popular personality types and stories from her own journey of self-discovery.

Be sure to [join us in the Facebook group](#), where we'll talking about what these principles look like in our own lives.

And, of course, you'll find printables, the vlog and podcast on [this month's course page](#).

~Mandi

# **A Personality Type Primer**

by Anne Bogel

If you want to become your best self, you need to be attuned to your own personality. Understanding your personality—and the personalities of others around you—will shape the way you navigate your life.

But first, you have a decision to make. There are many different models you can use to explore personality, and I'd recommend starting with just one. (I'd recommend starting with MBTI or the enneagram.) Every personality geek has their own favorite system: pick the one that strikes your fancy.

Once you've chosen, dive in and take the test ... but view those first results with a grain of salt. Some personality types will have a hard time getting an accurate result from these self-assessments. (Ironic, huh?) If you're struggling with answering the questions, or the results seem off-base to you, read through the descriptions of the different types and see what resonates. (Of course, this plays out in different ways. When you read about MBTI you'll smile and say "that's me!" when you read about the enneagram you'll feel exposed and *not* in a good way.)

When you find your type, you'll know. (I also found this method helpful for typing my kids and my husband.)

Let's get started:

## **Comprehensive systems for understanding personality...**

### **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**

Take the free test: [here](#)

Resources for further study: [Please Understand Me II](#) by David Keirsey

What it is: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was created in the 1940s and its insights have helped millions of people glean insight into their personality and put that knowledge to work in every day life. There are 16 distinctive personality type that emerge from preferences from the following "preferences": intraversion

(I) or extraversion (E), sensing (S) or intuition (N), thinking (T) or feeling (F), judging (J) or perceiving (P). Each type is expressed as a four-letter code.

What's to love: It's widely believed to be valid and reliable, corporate America depends on it, and understanding MBTI lets you enjoy all those "which Harry Potter character are you?" personality charts on BuzzFeed.

What's not to love: Psychologists aren't keen on MBTI, saying results are inconsistent and incomplete, and that the MBTI has no scientific basis.

## **Enneagram**

Take the free test: [here](#)

Resources for further study: [The Enneagram Made Easy](#) by Elizabeth Wagele and Renee Baron, [The Wisdom of the Enneagram](#) by Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson

What it is: The enneagram (as represented by its nine-pointed symbol) displays nine distinct strategies for relating to the self, others, and the world—that is, nine basic types of people. It's been around for centuries, originating from ancient Christian and medieval Sufi sources. The only person who can truly determine your enneagram type is *you*. Each type has healthy, average, and unhealthy levels.

What's to love: The enneagram reveals each type's motivations, core struggles, and life tasks, which can be wonderfully eye-opening *and* terribly unpleasant. (It's no picnic to face up to your own brokenness.) This tool prompts serious soul-searching for those who take it seriously. There are wonderful Christian resources for exploring the enneagram, such as Richard Rohr's [The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective](#).

What's not to love: For many, the enneagram is harder to penetrate than other personality tools, and it's recommended that you not try to determine your type until age 30 (ideally), but certainly no earlier than your mid to late 20s.

## **The Big Five**

Take the free test: [here](#)

Resources for further study: [Quirk](#) by Hannah Holmes

What it is: Psychologists have been working for a half century to create a personality assessment tool based on the five universal traits that consistently emerge among all world cultures: extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness. Also called the Five Factor model (although there's growing support to add a sixth trait, honesty-humility, to the measure.

What's to love: Psychologist created, psychologist approved.

What's not to love: This model isn't well known outside the field, and the resources for exploration are limited as of this time. It also has a marketing problem: no one wants to label themselves "disagreeable."

## **Not comprehensive systems, but...**

### **Clifton StrengthsFinder**

Take the test (not free): [here](#). Unfortunately, you can only get an access code by purchasing a copy of [StrengthsFinder 2.0](#) (kindle version counts).

What it is: This tool, based on the tenets of positive psychology, was introduced with the publication of [Now, Discover Your Strengths](#) in 2001. An updated version was released concurrent with [StrengthsFinder 2.0](#) in 2013. The tool identifies where you have the greatest potential for building strength, by measuring your recurring patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior. There are [34 possibilities](#), such as competition, discipline, and empathy.

What's to love: Many find the tool useful for discovering suitable jobs, planning for interviews, and improving on-the-job performance. It has a strong emphasis on the positive, and provides a useful way to think about your strengths, especially as they relate to your work.

What's not to love: The concept and terminology just don't resonate with some people, and it doesn't assess your whole personality.

### **Highly Sensitive People**

Take the free test: [here](#)

Resources for further study: [The Highly Sensitive Person](#) and [The Highly Sensitive Child](#), both by Elaine Aron

What it is: "Highly sensitive" is simply an either/or descriptor: it indicated if someone has a sensitive nervous system. A highly sensitive person is more sensitive to physical and/or emotional stimuli than the general population. The trait is genetic, and affects 15-20% of the population (all species, not just humans).

What's to love: Because of their sensitive nervous systems, HSPs are aware of subtleties in their surroundings and are easily overwhelmed by stimulating environments. They may avoid loud noises and bright lights, startle easily, or react strongly to violent books or films. Understanding that *this is you (or, your child)* can be a revelation.

What's not to love: If you're truly highly sensitive, the book [The Highly Sensitive Person](#) can be overwhelming due to its frank discussions of the effects of abuse on HSPs. If you suspect you're an HSP, read [The Highly Sensitive Child](#) instead.

There are no hard rules for getting started. Just pick the one that strikes your fancy and dive right in.

## ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS

1. Choose one of the systems above and spend some time taking the test and reading about your type. Write down three things you learn about yourself or your personality.

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2. If you've already spent some time with one of these systems, take the time to explore a new one. It's amazing how they all fit together like pieces of a puzzle!

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# Self-Knowledge Is Your Starting Point

by Anne Bogel

I've been obsessed with personality for as long as I remember.

The idea that you could check the box, answer the quiz, and gain deep insight into your soul (not to mention those of others around you) held great appeal. (That's typical for INFPs like myself, although I didn't know it at the time.)

Despite being obsessed with personality profiles from the moment I first heard of them, those personality tests weren't actually very helpful to me for many, many years. That's because without even realizing it, my answers to all those test questions reflected my aspirations, not my reality: they didn't reflect who I really was. (According to my early personality profiles, I was an intellectual, rational, linear-thinking type. *Not hardly.*)

I violated the first rule of self-knowledge: ask yourself *who you are*, not *who you wish to be*. When it comes to personality, naming *who you wish you could be* is a waste of time.

That's because personality tests don't measure traits that can be cultivated, like integrity, or generosity, or kindness. When we talk about personality, we're not talking about virtues or vices; we're talking about who you are at a gut level: the way you were wired, who you were *made* to be. If you're an ENFP, or an enneagram type 6, or an HSP, you can't be blamed for that—but you can't take credit for it, either. When it comes to personality, you are what you are. You can't hand your cards back and re-draw a more appealing combination.

When it comes to personality, you have to play the hand your dealt ... and yet personality discoveries are far from fatalistic. If your personality was your destiny, this topic would just invite unproductive navel-gazing. But personality isn't your fate, it's your starting point.

When you explore your own personality, the question isn't *What makes me so great?* (or, on the flip side, *Why am I so hopeless?*). It's *What am I really like?* One question invites forward movement: it prods you to discover who you

are, and why you're here. It spurs you to cultivate a healthy, whole self. The other does not.

But is knowing yourself really that hard? In a word, *yes*. It may seem like this should be easy: you've lived with yourself for a long time, after all. But that's the problem. Once you've spent several decades seeing the world from your own particular point of view, you don't even realize that *that's all you're seeing...one person's point of view*. You're accustomed to your own perspective, and it's easy to view it not as unique, but as *correct*. We too often don't understand how—or why—others see the world differently than we do.

Cultivating this knowledge is surprisingly difficult, but it's worth pursuing. Self-awareness is an incredible tool for understanding who you are, and why you do what you do. Most importantly, it's only when you truly understand yourself that *you can do something about it*.

Understanding the way you were made helps in all kinds of concrete ways, from the mundane to the earth-moving: You can recognize which jobs are a good fit for you, you can stop procrastinating, you can *finally* get organized. You can have more meaningful conversations with your kids, better visits with your best friend, more productive arguments with your significant other. Learning about your own personality will open your eyes to why you do what you do—whether they're healthy impulses or broken ones—and the impact that those things have on other people.

Self-knowledge isn't a magic bullet, but it can make a phenomenal difference in your life, your work, and your relationships. It's too important to not pursue. Let's do this.

## ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS

1. Do you enjoy reading about personality types and what makes people tick? Or does this all seem like meaningless navel-gazing?

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2. We instinctively know that certain personalities fit better in certain situations. A strict, tough drill instructor is great at bootcamp, but not so effective in a preschool classroom. In the same way, our personalities make things like various careers, being a stay-at-home parent, and even marriage easier for some of us and more work for others. In what ways does your personality predispose to your roles in life? In what ways do you have to overcome your natural inclinations?

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# Preparing for a Lightning Bolt Moment

by Anne Bogel

Have you ever had a lightning bolt moment?

When it comes to personal growth, progress usually unfolds in an incremental way: over time, we gradually get ourselves more organized, or establish a running routine, or wean ourselves off Diet Coke (ahem).

But every once in a while we experience an epiphany: we're hit by a bolt from the blue, and in an instant we understand how to fix something in our lives that hadn't been fixable the day, or even the hour, before. When we have a lightning bolt moment, something in our brains says *Aha!* and everything snaps into place in an instant.

I'll never forget the Thursday morning I was home with my kids, losing my temper *again* about the disastrous state of our house—and I'm not usually hot-headed! In a burst of insight, I realized that Thursday was the only day of the week I was home all day with the clutter, and that clutter was making me crazy.

Nothing changed about my home in that instant. But in that moment, I suddenly understood the problem for the first time. There was a conflict between my personality and my environment, and once I understood that, *I could change it*. Every single day is more peaceful in my house (okay, except for the ones when it *truly* looks like a tornado just blew through) because I know that clutter makes me crazy, and I have the power to control it.

When it comes to personality, knowledge is power.

That's a pretty mundane example. I have serious ones: I could tell you about the time I was contemplating taking our SJ child (that's Myers-Briggs speak) to counseling ... until I read up on his personality type. His behavior was textbook for his type (as was my reaction for *my* type), and I stopped worrying. Or about how for the first ten years of our marriage I thought that my husband was terrible at fighting fair ... and then I learned that the way he handled conflict was completely consistent with his personality. He wasn't *wrong*, just *different* than

me, and we've navigated our conflicts much better since the moment I realized that.

I could tell you how freeing it was for me to learn the crushing grief I felt over problems that weren't actually mine to grieve didn't make me crazy, it made me a highly sensitive person. My life changed the *moment* I realized this. And I've long recognized that I feel absolutely *broken* when I have to make any decision that will result in disappointment for someone. Once I recognized that was a perfectly normal reaction for a 9, that horrible feeling didn't go away, but understanding why I felt that way—and why it was perfectly normal for someone like me—helped enormously.

Here's the thing about epiphanies: they have the power to change your life in an instant. You're hit by a bolt from the blue, and it all becomes clear: you suddenly understand how to make that big decision, have that hard talk with your kid, or share a cubicle with your co-worker without losing your mind.

There's just one problem: you can't force an epiphany. (*If only.*) But you *can* cultivate an atmosphere that's welcoming to the burst of insight: learning about your own personality is more likely than any other thing I know—barring those milestones like a wedding, move, or funeral—to invite a lightning bolt moment.

When you strive to know yourself, you'll be rewarded with the knowledge you need to make actual, concrete changes in your life—changes that improve the way you work and rest, learn and serve, create and celebrate. Changes that help you better show love and participate in a community in the way that's right for *you*.

It's not easy. Sometimes learning about yourself is downright painful. But it's worth it.

P.S. Check out Gretchen Rubin's book [Better Than Before](#) for more about Lightning Bolt Moments, this time in the context of habit change.

## ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever had a lightning bolt moment, where something about your own personality—or that of someone close to you—and its effect on behavior suddenly made complete sense?

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2. Cultivate an environment that welcomes these insights in your own life by...

- reading about personality types
- talking to other people who have similar traits
- journaling your feelings, motivations and struggles
- making time for self-reflection by turning off the TV or radio and spending time alone

# **Discover Something You Didn't Know You Didn't Know**

by Mandi Ehman

Anne has already talked about lightning bolt moments, when something becomes very clear in a moment and you're able to move forward based on that information, and I think anyone who has been learning about their personality for any length of time has experienced those.

But there's also a slower growth that happens as we learn more about ourselves and what makes us tick, what triggers our anger, what motivates us, etc.

For example, when I was in college and newly married, I worked as the office manager for a busy real estate team. At 20 years old, at the height of the housing bubble, I got my real estate license and began working as a buyer's agent in the metropolitan D.C. area. I was with clients *all the time*—on holidays, on weekends, in the middle of snow storms (literally)—because houses were disappearing so quickly that there really was no other option.

This time in my life makes me laugh so much when I look back because I had no idea at the time that I was an introvert (or so *much* of an introvert), and I couldn't figure out why I was completely worn out and exhausted every. single. day. or why I loved and hated my job all at once.

I don't remember an exact moment that I realized I was an introvert, but I do know that it's only been in the last 7 years or so that I've fully understood what that meant (no, I'm not painfully shy or unable to hold a conversation with strangers!) and been able to use that information to take care of myself, to protect my time alone, and to cope when I'm surrounded by people for many days in a row.

Now, for example, I know that on a vacation with extended family, I need to carve out early mornings before anyone else is awake and quiet afternoons to enjoy a few hours by myself. I know that after a few days of socializing, I'll need just as many to stay home and recover.

I've realized that the reason I get frustrated with my kids 90% of the time is simply because I'm trying to live inside my own head while they're demanding my attention in the real world (and moving my attention to them and saving my thinking for another time eliminates it almost every time).

I had no idea that this was such an important part of my personality or something I'd really need to understand and address to live my best life, but it has made all of the difference in the world for me.

And that's why self-reflection and studying the personality types described by other people is so helpful—it offers us insight into ourselves that we don't even know we need!

## **ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS**

1. What is something you didn't know you didn't know about yourself until you started to learn more about it?

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2. How has understanding more about yourself helped you better react to other people or unpleasant situations?

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# **Task-Oriented Versus People-Oriented Personalities**

by Mandi Ehman

Hopefully we've already established the importance of understanding your personality or knowing yourself. The bottom line is that every personality has strengths and weaknesses, and understanding what your natural inclinations are allows you take advantage of the strengths and create a plan to overcome the weaknesses.

While it's not really a complete personality system like the ones Anne outlined, one thing I've always been fascinated by is the task-oriented versus people-oriented personality spectrum. I am sure this is because I am so strongly task-oriented, and I appreciate having a name for the focus I tend to place on my to-do list and getting things done.

As with all personality types, there is no right or wrong here. We need a balance of both personalities within society. People-oriented personalities build relationships and community, while task-oriented personalities get things done. Both are important and both have drawbacks.

And just like we need a balance of both to make the world go round, we also need to find a balance of both within our homes and within ourselves.

If you're like me, your natural bent toward one end of the spectrum or the other may be so strong that you know without a doubt which personality type you are. If you're somewhere toward the middle, you may have to spend more time thinking it through. Either way, understanding more about yourself allows you to capitalize on the strengths of your personality while being aware of the weaknesses so that you can look for ways to improve.

## **Defining your tendencies**

First, let's look at the characteristics of both personality types to help you identify which describes you:

### ***TASK-ORIENTED PERSONALITIES TEND TO:***

- Focus on their to-do list and the things they hope to accomplish.
- Be concerned with productivity and efficiency.
- Have concrete goals and detailed lists.

### ***PEOPLE-ORIENTED PERSONALITIES TEND TO:***

- Focus on the needs of the people around them.
- Be concerned with building relationships and keeping people happy.
- Place more importance on the feelings and happiness of people than on their to-do list.

## **Finding balance**

Although I am strongly task-oriented, I obviously care about my husband and my children as well. Understanding my personality means that I have to consciously take a step back from a project, idea, or task to consider their needs and the time I'm spending with them so that I'm not neglecting those relationships in favor of my to-do list.

On the other hand, if you are strongly people-oriented, you may find that the opposite is true. You may need to figure out ways to balance your people focus with your responsibilities, whatever they may be. While it's true that in 20 years you won't regret taking extra time to play with your children, we all have responsibilities that truly need our attention as well.

So how do you find a balance between both focuses? Here are some tips for both personality types:

### ***TASK-ORIENTED PERSONALITIES:***

1. Schedule time to focus on the people around you and commit to setting aside your to-do list during that time.
2. Consciously make eye contact when your husband or children speak to you so that they have your full attention, even though you may be tempted to multitask.

3. Add relationship-building tasks to your to-do list, such as sending birthday cards, calling your mom or having a date night with your husband.
4. Go outside, to the library, or to a museum where you can just enjoy being with your family without the distraction of things that need to be done.

***PEOPLE-ORIENTED PERSONALITIES:***

1. Get your husband and children involved in your chores. Turn on music and work together to get things done while having fun and spending time together.
2. Look for opportunities to get things done in smaller chunks rather than saving them all up to do at once. For example, you can wipe down the bathroom as part of your morning routine or load the dishwasher immediately following a meal.
3. Use the time you spend on the phone with your husband or a friend to do routine chores, such as folding laundry or dusting.
4. Rather than feeling like you have to choose between cuddling your little ones or getting chores done, use a sling, wrap or carrier to combine both.

As with all personality types understanding your personality is the first step. Once you understand your natural inclinations and how they affect your life and the people around you, you can make a plan to capitalize on your strengths and address your weaknesses!

**ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS**

1. How would you characterize your personality on the task-oriented versus people-oriented spectrum? Do you lean toward one of the extremes, or are you more in the middle?

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2. Whichever way you lean, how do you balance your natural tendencies with the needs of your family and obligations?

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## **When You Know Yourself, You Understand Others Better Too**

by Mandi Ehman

The funniest part about personality tests for me is that whenever I read the relationship section of any given personality type, the people closest to me line up perfectly with types that are theoretically the best companions for my type. As someone with a "maverick" personality, it always irks me a little that I fit so neatly within the box, but it also fascinates me that personality types really are that influential in our lives.

One of the best byproducts of this so-called navel gazing is that as you make these discoveries and have these lightning bolt moments about yourself, you develop a new appreciation for the unique motivations, reactions, personalities, and tendencies of other people as well.

That doesn't mean that you suddenly like *everybody* or you *never* get annoyed with anyone again, but you do develop a willingness to try to get to know people better, to try to understand what makes them tick and why they react to certain situations.

And it gives you a better perspective for seeing how your significant other's personality dictates the way they respond in certain situations, how the things that cause conflict between you and your children are parts of their inborn personalities, why a friend acts in a way that seems neurotic...in a completely different way than your own neurosis, and so on.

It's given me a new empathy for people who are predisposed to melancholy, something that used to really annoy me because I considered it solely a choice. It's shown me that while there are useful strategies you can use for resolving conflict, the way people naturally respond to conflict (one person's need to walk away before attempting to resolve it or another's desire to talk it out right away) are not necessarily good or bad.

I read a fortune cookie proverb recently: "We judge others by actions; we judge ourselves by intentions." I don't know about you, but this is 100% true in my own

life. My natural inclination is to try to explain my motivations and my intentions when I make a mistake or hurt someone, but when someone else makes a mistake or hurts me, I want them to pay for their actions instead.

Learning about personality is really all about the motivations and intentions behind each personality type. As we learn more about our own, we're then more willing and better able to consider them for other people as well.

Ultimately, that leads to stronger relationships, better conflict resolution, and more grace for the people around us.

## **ACTIVITIES & QUESTIONS**

1. "We judge others by actions; we judge ourselves by intentions." Does this proverb ring true in your own life? How do you feel when other people judge you by your actions instead of your intentions?

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2. Has learning more about your own personality helped you to view other people differently or with more grace? Can you think of a time that learning about someone else's personality changed your view of a situation or conflict?

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## **An Interview with Anne Bogel**

### **1. If you could only describe yourself based on one characteristic of your personality, which one would you choose?**

This is hard! And it's especially hard given my personality type according to the Myers-Briggs typing system. I'm an INFP: I dwell in possibility; I hate being confined to just one option. If I had to define myself based on just one characteristic, I'd choose the part of me that loves possibility for possibility's sake, that craves limitless options, that doesn't like to be tied down to one thing—if only because it's the trait I've had the hardest time beating into submission.

### **2. We've talked a lot about how knowing yourself equips you for life you love, but how has studying personality helped you to understand the people around you better as well?**

Personality research has helped me develop so much empathy for the people around me. While studying personality has obviously helped me understand how I'm wired, you can't learn about what makes you unique without realizing that everyone around you is also unique, in their own way. Learning about personality has taught me how to play to other peoples' strengths, to communicate in a way that the people around me can understand, to express love in a way that those I love can really feel.

Learning about personality has also earned me a hefty dose of humility—and that's never bad for my relationships.

### **3. Have you ever disagreed with a description or characterization of your personality (not just at a "which Harry Potter character are you based on your MBTI" level, but the core description of your personality type)?**

That has definitely happened to me! When I disagree with the core description of my personality type, there's usually one of a few things going on.

It's possible I've gotten my type all wrong. This has happened to me in the past when I answer the questions on a personality quiz aspirationally—the way I wish I was —instead of actually—the way I am.

This next example sounds similar, but it's not quite the same. As I've gotten older, I've started getting strange results when I take personality quizzes, results that I don't feel describe my type at all. That's because a personality quiz usually asks you to describe your current behavior. As I've become more attuned to the strengths and weaknesses of my personality, I've developed coping strategies to mitigate my weaknesses. This is excellent for life in general, but really skews the results of a personality quiz.

Finally, if the description of my core personality type is way off base according to a certain typing system, it's possible that that's just not the right system for me. People tend to prefer whatever typing system best captures their type. If your own personality doesn't slot neatly into the available types for a given system, it's likely that you'd gain more insight using a different system.

#### **4. How do you take care of your needs as an introvert with a houseful of homeschooled kids?**

I want to start by saying that I'm able to rattle off an answer to this question now, but only because I spent years figuring out a way to happily homeschool as an introverted mother.

Now that my eyes are open to the challenges of homeschooling for an introvert, I make it a priority to take good care of my introverted self. I don't do well with constant noise, and I hate to talk all day, so I reviewed our schedule with a critical eye for ways to eliminate the nonstop noise and talking. This includes very mundane things. For example, we have a set snack time and an approved list of snacks, so no questioning Mom about what and when to eat every day.

As an introvert, I've learned to outsource the stuff it's not essential for me to take care of as my kids' mother or teacher. For example, we use a lot of audiobooks at my house. I love reading aloud to my kids, but my voice needs a break. Now we do Story of the World, Harry Potter, Little House, The Hobbit, even Pride and



Prejudice on audio. It's a nice change of pace for me to be the audience instead of the performer, and my kids love hearing the varied narrators.

I'm also hard core about guarding our daily rest time. Every day from 1:00-3:00, my kids spend time to themselves. (My youngest is five; we had to work up to this point. Rest time is only so restful when you're past the nap stage but not quite to the happy independent play stage. I understand, and I'm sorry, but believe me—it gets better.) This is rest time for my kids, but I also make it a point to take some rest time for myself during these hours. This isn't the time to blitz my to-do list or catch up on phone calls; it's the time to recharge my introverted batteries. While this doesn't always feel like the most productive use of my time in the moment, I've learned I'm much more productive when I'm not feeling drained and depleted.

**5. You've taken the tests and read the books and embraced your personality types...what's next? How do you keep growing once you've read "everything" there is to read about your personality?**

Self-discovery and self-formation are lifelong processes. And it's important to keep in mind that while some personality typing systems give you simple yes/no answer, others deal with stages of emotional health (and dysfunction), and no one is ever going to complete the task of reaching emotional or spiritual maturity. This is why some personality typing systems are frequently used as tools for spiritual growth.

**6. Is there such thing as spending too much time learning about your personality? When does it move from healthy to unhealthy?**

Personality typing is a tool, and like any tool, it matters how you put it to work for you, and to what end. Personality study shouldn't be an end in itself: it's simply a means to a more intentional life, better relationships, and emotional and spiritual maturity. It becomes unhealthy at the point where it moves from a path to The Main Thing to The Thing.

## Podcast Transcript

Visit [the course page](#) to listen to or download the audio file of this podcast.

### **Mandi Ehman**

Hi, Anne. How are you today?

### **Anne Bogel**

I'm good, Mandi. How are you?

### **Mandi Ehman**

I'm great. Thank you so much for joining us today. You are Anne Bogel from [Modern Mrs. Darcy](#), and we will talk a little bit more about your blog and the things you have coming up at the end of the call. But when I started planning the Live course topics and I knew that what I wanted to talk about was knowing yourself and personality, you were just the top-of-mind blogger to ask to talk to us about this. Because it's something you're really passionate about, not just as a blogger, but personally in your own life. Is that right?

### **Anne Bogel**

Yes, definitely. And thank you.

### **Mandi Ehman**

So, if we—we're just going to dive right into talking about personality. And I thought one of the things that was so interesting from your written posts is when you talked about how your original personality tests were inaccurate because you answered them according to your aspirations or who you wanted to be, rather than who you actually are. When did you realize that difference? Or what made you realize that difference? And do you remember the first test you took after that, and the moment when you realized it made a big difference?

### **Anne Bogel**

I didn't have a big lightning bolt one day. I think I took Myers-Briggs. It's Myers-Briggs that I really realized that I had been answering aspirational like instead of factually. And I took it for the first time in high school, had very reliable results in college. I was raised in a family of lawyers and judges and INTJ types. And that's what I answered—I didn't have the self-awareness to see that wasn't actually me as much as I think the people around me wanted it to be me and were hoping to raise me to be. It wasn't until after I started having kids in my 20s that I realized these things aren't working for me that I think should come easier. And I don't

understand why. And it wasn't one blinding burst of insight. It was little by little I realized, "Oh, wait, I've been doing this wrong."

**Mandi Ehman**

Right. That makes sense. And I think the interesting part about that is that it takes self-awareness to realize that. And that's kind of the purpose. That's one of the reasons we learn about personality, is for that self-awareness. So, it kind of goes hand in hand as you're learning more about yourself that your test results probably do get—for all of us—more accurate over time.

**Anne Bogel**

To a point definitely. Yeah, and I think I've always been—I'm an INFP by Myers-Briggs. I'm a self-reflective person. I think I had a good deal of self-awareness for a teenager, but still I was so blind in this area. And I think a lot of that is just the process of growing up. You grow up and you think your own family of origin is normal, and you think the way you think is the way everybody else thinks. So I doubt that my approach to the Myers-Briggs personality profile was that odd. But, yeah, it threw me for a long time.

**Mandi Ehman**

That's interesting. And I think—I mean, I don't know that I could have ever gotten accurate results as a teenager because in my early-20s to mid-20s I remember being like, "Oh, I don't feel like I'm actually at all like I thought I was." Just this whole new side of my personality came out that maybe wasn't even really there when I was younger.

**Anne Bogel**

I don't think that's just you.

**Mandi Ehman**

So, you have talked about other epiphanies you've had, even if that one wasn't one for you. And can you just tell us about one of those epiphanies and really how, not just the moment of realizing something about yourself, but then how it affected things moving forward and how it changed once you realized that you were reacting according to your personality?

**Anne Bogel**

Oh, wow. I have so many to choose from. Let me—do you want it to be personality specific like Myers-Briggs or StrengthsFinder or Enneagram or anything?

**Mandi Ehman**

I think anything. I mean, I don't think we have to fit it into a box for it to be—to demonstrate why learning about yourself, or realizing something about yourself is important.

**Anne Bogel**

I appreciate that mindset. Okay. This is from a while ago, maybe six or seven years. And the way our life—I have four kids. I might have just had three at the time. The way our life was structured at the time, there was only one day of the week when I was home with my kids all day long. And one Thursday morning, I found myself totally losing my temper at 9:00 in the morning. We hadn't even been up that long. And I thought I am a terrible mother. I just lose it every Thursday morning. I can't handle being with my kids all day. I'm just a terrible person. I feel so bad.

And I'm pretty mellow. I'm pretty easy-going, so it takes a lot to get me really fired up. And I was really totally losing my cool very early in the morning. And I finally realized—and I think I heard myself yelling like, "I just can't take all this crap all over the floor," and I realized in that moment it wasn't my kids that were making me crazy. It was the mess. And since then, I've come to realize I think I'm easy-going and I think I'm okay with being a little bit on the messy side, and I think I'm okay with that, but really it makes me crazy. It makes me cranky. I like things to be clean and orderly. And being surrounded in a house all day where there's just kid stuff everywhere, wasn't giving my brain the quiet it needed to breathe.

And I hadn't heard about what a highly sensitive person was at the time. I hadn't heard about Gretchen Rubin, how order—she says pretty much everybody, whether you want to believe it or not—attributes to inner calm. I didn't know any of that. I just went, "Oh, I can fix this." And that was a huge insight. My mood—like what kind of mother I was, what kind of wife I was, what kind of person I was, whether or not I was happy with myself, it's just like put away the laundry. It's not like scaling a mountain. It's just putting some stuff out of sight.

**Mandi Ehman**

Yeah. And do you think that's made you more disciplined or more—now, that you're home more—conscience of that clutter in general because you know how it will affect the rest of your life?

**Anne Bogel**

Yeah, definitely. Because I would say in theory they're just Legos. It's not that big a deal. Let's major on to majors. But taking care of those little, small things really does make everybody so much happier. And happier people are more fun to live with and can get more work done, too, if you want to take a very practical stance on it. Yeah, huge difference.

**Mandi Ehman**

Absolutely. For me, I had a similar situation. Not with clutter, but where I realized that my frustration level comes from trying to do multiple things at once. So, I can handle going for a walk with my kids and all five of them talking to me at one time if I'm focusing on them. But if I'm trying to do anything else, whether it's work on the computer or just folding the laundry—because I'm such an introvert, I get lost in my head, and then just these voices take me off the charts so quickly because I feel like I'm being pulled in so many different directions. And so knowing that I either need to put my focus on them or ask them kindly to go away for a few minutes has made a big difference in my ability to cope in those situations.

**Anne Bogel**

Oh, yeah. I'm laughing because I relate. Not because I think you're crazy. I get that.

**Mandi Ehman**

That's funny. You just gave me a great segue actually because my next thought was that even though my personality type is a Maverick is what it's called on the Enneagram. And I like to think of myself that way. I'm one of a kind. I'm different. I'm out of the box, or whatever. Whenever I take a personality test or read about my personality, I'm always like, "Oh, I fit right in this box. I'm just like every other introvert. I'm just like every other INTJ. I'm just like every other eight." And sometimes that's almost a little discouraging to me. I want to be myself, not like everybody else.

Do you, with your personality type, find that same kind of discouragement, or is that something that is really encouraging to you actually, to know that you are just like every other INTP or every other nine?

**Anne Bogel**

No, it doesn't really bother me at all. I'm an INFP, so listeners don't get confused.

**Mandi Ehman**

Oh, INFP. Yeah.

**Anne Bogel**

I don't know. Will's very borderline. I might be married to an INTP and, yet, we wouldn't be confused for each other. So, it's actually encouraging to me. Generally, I think I have a to-each-his-own mindset anyway. But as an NF, and especially as an INFP, it's not the rarest type, but it's pretty rare. And sometimes I think why doesn't everybody care about these issues like I do. Why doesn't everybody want to have deep thoughts for nine hours at a time? I mean, I'll need a nap afterwards, but I really enjoy the process. And it's encouraging to me to know that I'm not boring to the other types in my life. They just don't care about things the way I do.

But there are people out there who do, and it's not—I was reading up on this before we talked about the challenges of the INFP. And I'm sorry to talk about my own type so much, but I think the best way to understand how personality applies to you is to hear how it applies very specifically to someone and their type.

**Mandi Ehman**

Absolutely.

**Anne Bogel**

So, that's my excuse for talking about myself. But how INFPs can get frustrated that they tend to have friendships and personal relationships with a few people very deeply. And sometimes it can be frustrating to me like, oh, I just don't meet all that many people that I really feel this gut-level connection to. And it's very comforting for me to be like, well, that is frustrating, but it's normal. And just knowing that it's normal and you're not messed up—like you didn't come out of the box wrong, is really encouraging to me.

**Mandi Ehman**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Anne Bogel**

I don't think about this on a daily basis. This is when on a bad day. That's very encouraging to me.

**Mandi Ehman**

No, I understand that. I agree, too. There is an encouragement in knowing that some of the more unique sides of your personality are unique, but are not weird

or abnormal or something to, I guess, be concerned about unless you're reading the Enneagram. And then I guess they might be like you're siding towards the not-so-good side of your personality.

### **Anne Bogel**

And with the Enneagram, there are only nine types, but I feel like those manifest in—there are so many factors there that doesn't faze me at all. So, as a nine, my driving motivation is avoiding conflict or seeking peace and harmony. I don't know. That doesn't seem that weird to me that there are nine core types of people. That doesn't seem like so limiting. But I'm not a Maverick, so it's very interesting for me to hear how other people feel about the box they're in.

### **Mandi Ehman**

Yeah. And I fit—I mean, I fit right into both of those boxes for Enneagram and for Myers-Briggs. When I read them, I'm just like, yeah, that's me completely. So, yeah, I don't know that—I think my personality is also one that I don't especially get discouraged by things. It's more like just a self-awareness of, "Oh, you think you're a special snowflake," to use Megan Tietz's word, "but you're not really. You're just like everybody else who has your personality."

### **Anne Bogel**

Well, yes and no.

### **Mandi Ehman**

So, on that note, though, one thing—I really wish I could go back to school and just study personality because I find it so fascinating. And the thing this year that has really captured my attention is how these different personality types layer together, and the difference that really makes in a person as a whole. So, when I read about INTJ, I fit in that box 100 percent completely. And so does, for example, Tsh from TheArtofSimple.net, but we're very different people. Tsh and I are very different people.

On the Enneagram, then, I'm an eight, while she's a three. And I think that makes a really big difference because we both very much fit in those boxes, too. Have you looked into not just different programs on their own, but how they layer together and the additional insight that gives you? And I don't even have, I guess, a firm question here. I'd just be interested in hearing your thoughts on how those things work together.

**Anne Bogel**

What I appreciate most about the different personality systems is how they give you a framework and a language—a paradigm in which to view how you work, how you relate to people, how you live, how you think. And it's very useful to me just to be able to put words to those abstract thoughts that I think many of us tend to have floating around in our heads. Those niggling "I think there's something here, but I can't quite articulate it." A personality system can really help you see what's there just by giving you a lens to which—through which to view a certain person or a certain situation.

Actually, we heard Susan Wise Bauer—I know you're familiar with her—speak about teaching and parenting and life as a mom and as a parent in Cincinnati last year. And she was saying how—she was talking about the odd kid out and what it's like to parent one. But the little nugget I took away from that is she said that anyone who has a hard time finding their place in the world should take every personality test they can just to give them a way to reflect on themselves: how they're made, how they work, what kind of avenues would be best for them to pursue. And I thought that was a really interesting way to look at it.

Even with kids, just to help them see why they do the things they do. So, as far as them layering together, I think if you find that kind of self-reflection valuable, the different personality tests can be a very useful way to help you. But it's like giving you a map almost for self-exploration. And different people click with different systems. And some people like to find where they plot in all of them. And just finding the one that resonates with you can be really helpful.

**Mandi Ehman**

Absolutely. So, this question was not on the list that we had talked about ahead of time, but because you mentioned it in passing: Can you tell me a little bit about how you approach personalities with your kids? Is it something you really study, or you just think about in passing in the course of things? And do you think they're even accurate tests for kids, or is it something you really have to wait until you're older to discover?

**Anne Bogel**

Well, I need to stipulate when we begin—because of my personality, I stink at pattern recognition. And as much as I know about Myers-Briggs, I am terrible at typing people. INTJ is really easy to pick out because I can go, oh, not me: the planning, the organization. And I thought I was for a long time. That was really the ideal I was raised with. But typing other people I'm really not good at. But with my kids, it's been very useful for me to read about them. It's not something



we talk about together usually. There's an exception. Remind me if I forget, but just in general I find it very useful to read upon them myself.

I really like *Please Understand Me* by David Keirse. The whole book is kind of a slog if you read it straight through, I think. But he has some excellent, excellent chapters in the back about how parents and children relate to each other based on their personality type. If you're raising kids with a spouse or a partner, he talks about how each spouse is likely to shine and struggle in parenthood. And he talks about what some common, likely even, tension points are going to be. And that's been hugely helpful to me. Just it's interesting and fun when you're in a great place. But when you're having a struggle with one of your kids, it's just very reassuring. I've gotten a lot of practical help from there.

Like a couple times, one of my kids was driving me crazy because they were insisting on something that seemed really rigid and maybe we need to see a therapist. I mean, I'd open the book and it would be like, no, I'm raising a little SJ. And it was very foreign to me. Just something like that could be enormously reassuring.

But here's the exception: I do have a child who—I don't know—is very self-reflective, but also may be struggling to find their place in the world and doesn't always understand why this kid isn't as—why things bother this child that don't bother classmates. Why this kid is particularly struggling with, say, a reading choice at school or something like that. And it's been very helpful for us to have conversations together that go, well, you know that it makes you feel comfortable when... You know that it makes you feel uncomfortable when this happens. You know that you prefer to have things this way. You know that you get anxious when you don't know what's coming in advance.

That has been very helpful to explicitly say this is the way you were made. That is good. That is okay. That is healthy. And what you're feeling is normal. So, with those as the ground rules, what should we do? That's been huge. And it's only in the past few—I don't think you can do that with a five-year-old so much. I mean, you can certainly—we had an [unintelligible 19:37] telling us when we were young, I don't think this is necessarily a personality issue, but it's all self-knowledge. That if you have a kid who freaks out because they don't know what's coming next, then show them a picture of what's coming next. So, there're definitely ways you can take advantage of that knowledge as a parent, even before you have the big talk about the kid like this is the way you were made, this is how you're a special snowflake.

But just in the late-grade school years has it been helpful to actually talk about that. And really what we've been trying to do is equip this child with the tools they need to think through these things on their own before we freak out. And it's imperfect, but it really has helped a lot.

### **Mandi Ehman**

I love that. I mean, it's not like you have to be able to define them according to a type to be able to say this is your personality and here's how we can help you cope in situations. And I think that's a great way to build self-awareness, even if they—not everyone is going to be fascinated by personality types. But self-awareness is important even outside of following a specific system or knowing what a specific system says. And I think that's a great way to start building that, especially for kids who might not fit into typical childhood molds, whatever that might be.

As I'm talking, I'm sitting here thinking how can I use this with my own kids because I'm not sure I've been really great about that. and I kind of like the dialog you just acted out there about how you talk to them about some of those hard situations and what it means for their personality.

### **Anne Bogel**

Well, thank you. And it has been eye-opening to me as a parent, too. Like we have a child who is a huge highly-sensitive person. And I am, too, so I completely—I get that and I know how to—I empathize and I can help him deal with that to a large extent. But it came up in conversation the other day that he hated the book for school *The Red Badge of Courage*, and—no, that's not the one. It was the *Trojan War*. And I knew that at the time—this was assigned back in the fall—we were struggling with it. But it never occurred to me while we were reading it that one of the reasons he was having a really hard time with this book was that it's pretty gruesome, bloody, graphic descriptions of people being killed in war. And he hates that kind of thing.

And that was a big lightbulb for me. Like, oh, that makes so much sense. I don't know why I didn't see it at the time. And so a conversation I've been having with my husband is on the one hand it's fine with me if he wants to avoid that kind of stuff. I don't watch the news. I don't watch violent films. And that is why. Like it just overwhelms me. But on the other hand, this is life. You're going to go to school and get assigned a book that you really struggle with. So, I mean, even at a young age just teaching these kids—we've never used the words highly sensitive person with him, but just teaching these kids, oh, I understand why you feel like that. You're feeling that way because that kind of content is really hard for you. And then from there, you can figure out what to do about it.

But a lot of people—and this is the case with my kids, too, but I think adults to it, too—will get in a situation or—whether it’s their environment or whether it’s in a relationship context where they just feel bad. They feel like something is not right, but they can’t always articulate what exactly the problem is. So, what I like about personality in general and what we’re really trying to do with our kids is to help them put their finger on what the problem is instead of just thinking, oh, I feel like something is not right in my world, which is overwhelming and you can’t do anything about that except feel bad, is give them the tools to articulate this is what’s making me feel bad.

And even the knowledge helps calm people down. I mean, it calmed me down. Calmed my kids down. But whether or not you can do anything about it—but so often you can do something about it. And so we’re just trying to teach them how to walk that process.

**Mandi Ehman**

That is really awesome. I think there’s a lot of wisdom there. You used “we” a lot. Is Will—does he like personality tests and learning about personalities and that kind of thing as much as you? Or are you pulling him along with you as you learn more?

**Anne Bogel**

Oh, no, he doesn’t care. Except for—he cares a lot if it’s mattered in our family setting. For him personally, no, he’s not a personality geek.

**Mandi Ehman**

That’s funny.

**Anne Bogel**

It was years before I could get him to take a Myers-Briggs test.

**Mandi Ehman**

Yeah. I got my husband to take one, and I’m not sure I 100 percent believe the results because he was just, okay, let me just answer this. I’m not going to think about these questions. I don’t care. I’m just going to—

**Anne Bogel**

But in his defense, he went to grad school for human development, and it makes him insane the way that people completely botch Myers-Briggs.

**Mandi Ehman**

That's funny.

**Anne Bogel**

It's not a system that medical people or psychologists love at all by any means, but I don't think that's it. It just drives him crazy for people to say things like, oh, my kid got a bad grade. Therefore, their personality is formed. And he's like, no, we're talking about like the death of a parent being a significant influence, not you getting grounded.

**Mandi Ehman**

That's funny. So, you talked a little bit about highly sensitive persons, and I have to admit for a long time I looked at people who were HSPs as them. I'm me and you all are you because I—again, I think this comes from being an INTJ and an eight, leaning towards the Maverick side of that. To me, the word “sensitive” is—I don't mean this as harsh as it sounds, but it's not a desirable quality. Like sensitive is fussy. That's what it sounds like to me.

**Anne Bogel**

It means you're touchy and easily offended. I think it's a huge semantics problem.

**Mandi Ehman**

Right. And so for a long time I was like, well, I am not one of them. But I really am. I am so HSP. I don't know why that letter is hard for me to get out. I really am. I'll be like turn the radio down, I can't stand it. Why is there so much noise? And even—I don't know if it developed over time or what, but when I got pregnant with my first daughter, I stopped watching all crime shows. I couldn't handle them anymore. Not a little bit, not even just hearing about them. And so I can now see very much that I do fall into that category, even though I tended to be put off by it when I first heard about it.

As an HSP yourself, how do you—do you ever feel like that word “sensitive”, fussy, touchy, going that way? Do you ever feel like people use it as an excuse for avoiding situations they just don't want to deal with, versus the situations that are really actually hard for them? Is there a difference there? Is there a way to say we're not going to take this too far? Does that question even make sense?

**Anne Bogel**

Yeah, I get what you're saying. This isn't something that I—or, no, I don't advertise being a highly sensitive person. I talk about it freely on my blog, but it's—unlike Myers-Briggs or Enneagram, it's not something I find myself talking a

lot about on a day-in/day-out basis. I think about it a lot. And it definitely shapes the way I live and the way we've structured our home and my work and all that.

I think what happens sometimes with these personality things is people think—they hear the phrase “highly sensitive” and they think they know what it means. But a lot of times what you understand exactly what the person who created this phrase and did the research into it—her name's Elaine Aron. And if you read about what she's talking about, a highly sensitive person can manifest in many different ways. And they don't all affect everybody at all or equally. But it means that you're nervous system is truly more sensitive than that of the general population. It affects 15 to 20 percent of people. It's across species. It doesn't necessarily mean that you don't want to have a hard conversation or watch *Rambo*.

**Mandi Ehman**

Right.

**Anne Bogel**

And I think just really understanding what that really means takes away the likelihood that you'll hide behind a get-out-of-jail-free card. That's not what it is at all. So, it's a way of describing your nervous system.

**Mandi Ehman**

I have not read her book. Does she talk about—I know, obviously, she talks about coping with it, but does she talk about coping when you can't change a situation? So, when you need to be in a situation where there's lots of lights and noises and people and stimulation and that kind of thing, does she provide coping mechanisms for within those situations as well, versus go shopping early in the day when there's not as many people? Those type of coping mechanisms.

**Anne Bogel**

She does talk about that a lot. And actually in her book—actually I haven't read the whole book *The Highly Sensitive Person*, and it's because I am a highly sensitive person and it was completely overwhelming to my HSP self to read her descriptions of how HSPs are—I mean, everyone's impacted by domestic violence or sexual abuse. But there was a lot of—she had a lot of chapters about how those specific things impact HSPs specifically, and like those things are in your past. They're done. And so coping with the moving forward. But as an HSP, I just couldn't go on reading that information. I couldn't handle it. So, what I did instead was—she has a book called *The Highly Sensitive Child*, which was a little—it still talks about those things, but it was a little tamer. And I have kids,

which probably made me more likely to pick up a book called *The Highly Sensitive Child*. But also I was a kid once, and everybody was a kid once. And the way she talks about HSP and children helps you see yourself, I think, just as well as *The Highly Sensitive Person* that's specifically aimed at adults does.

But, yeah, she does talk about coping. And it's not necessarily you live in some Utopian land where you have total control over your environment and can paint the walls a soothing blue. So, yeah, don't despair if you feel like you're stuck. I'm sure there's something there to be found. And even knowing what the problem is, again, I think is hugely helpful.

### **Mandi Ehman**

Yeah, absolutely. I think even being able to say to my husband, look, this might not be normal to you, but for some of us it is normal to be overwhelmed by everybody yelling while the music is on. That's sometimes all I'll say, "Can we please just turn the music off for a few minutes?" Because it's too many different things going on at once, and I can't process any of them.

Well, before we end I would love for you to tell us a little more about what is coming up at [Modern Mrs. Darcy](#). I know that you just had a beautiful new redesign in preparation for some exciting things. So, I'll let you tell our listeners about what some of those are.

### **Anne Bogel**

I did just have a new redesign. And it's just in time for summer reading, and I know that I have more stuff happening on the blog past this summer, but I'm so buried in summer reading right now. I don't even know what it is. So, but it's a nice place to be buried. So, every year I put out—this will be the fourth year—an annual summer reading guide. This year, just like last year, they'll be seven categories, five books each. It's designed to appeal to my demographic, which is 96 percent women, smart, thoughtful, happy to dive deep in issues and want to read more than whatever they have on the end cap at Target.

So, the idea is that even if getting your book recommendations from *The New York Times* Bestseller List may or may not align with your tastes. But if you like my blog and the kind of books I talk about, there's a curated list that helps you narrow down the options. Because my personality type is easily overwhelmed by a whole book store. But if you put five good books in front of my, only seven categories, then I can choose something to read without spending my whole summer choosing what to read.

**Mandi Ehman**

Right.

**Anne Bogel**

So, I'm really excited about that. It's been a lot of fun in the past. I really enjoy it. And I'm very excited to share. So, there's a good mix of new and old. So, it comes out on May 15<sup>th</sup>, and right now I'm frantically reading three of the new releases I couldn't get my hands on early that came out like on Tuesday, so I can see if they're worthy of consideration [unintelligible].

**Mandi Ehman**

Oh, my goodness.

**Anne Bogel**

Because I read all these books before they go in. I don't read every book I talk about on my blog. A lot of times I talk about the books that I hope to read, and then later on read them and I'll be thrilled or disappointed with it, just like everybody else is. But with summer reading, I've read them all. Can talk about them. Can answer questions if you have concerns about content or triggers or anything. So, it's lots of fun, but, yeah, it's my fulltime job is summer reading these days.

**Mandi Ehman**

Well, that's exciting. I love your guide, and I can't wait for the new one to come out. So, I will be sure to include a link in our—we're recording this early, so the podcast won't actually be available until it's already released. But I will go ahead and give a link to our course participants because we have a lot of readers. So, I'm sure they'll be excited to hear about that early, too.

**Anne Bogel**

It'll be ready and waiting.

**Mandi Ehman**

Great. Thank you so much for joining us, Anne, for working through—we had some kid things in the middle and a few technical difficulties that I appreciate your flexibility this morning in making it work.

**Anne Bogel**

Oh, it happens to me, too.

**Mandi Ehman**

Have a great day.

**Anne Bogel**

Thank you. It was great talking to you.

**Mandi Ehman**

You, too. Bye-bye.