

Podcast Transcript

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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 your 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 15th, 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.