

FINDING BRAVE

with Kathy Caprino

Transcript

Finding Brave Episode #11

How Dramatic Change Will Reveal Who You Really Are

Kathy Caprino

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The reality is, when we stay in a status quo mode, when we're not growing, when things are not changing, when we're not juggling new things that we never thought we had to face, we don't really understand what we're capable of. It's a dramatic change that shows you how strong you really are, how capable, how resourceful, how brilliant, how compassionate. It teaches you about yourself in a completely new frame, because there's a new lens in terms of what you're experiencing.

Hello, everyone, this is Kathy Caprino, and welcome to my podcast, *Finding Brave*. I've created this show for everyone who longs to create something bold and brave in their life, to rise up, speak up, and stand up for who they are, and to reach their highest and biggest visions. Each week, I'll be speaking with inspiring guests from all walks of business, leadership, entertainment, the creative arts, and the entrepreneurial world, and they'll be sharing their intimate stories of finding brave and offer their best strategies for building your most rewarding, joyful, and meaningful life, business, and career.

Hello, everybody. This is Kathy Caprino, and welcome to *Finding Brave*. I'm thrilled that you're here today. I'm sitting here in the middle of a Nor'easter, so I apologize. You're going to probably hear a little window banging, and a few things flying across the courtyard, so I apologize for that. I am sending up prayers that everyone who is in the path of this is safe.

Today I want to talk to you about something that is really near and dear to my heart, and powerfully— what's the word? It's really relevant in my life today. We're talking about how a dramatic change reveals who you really are, and how

you can exponentially grow from it. Let me dive in by saying what I'm going to talk about here is what comes out of a lot of work I do with clients every day, every week, every month, but also what I'm going through, what I've experienced in my life.

I wrote a Forbes post on this which I'll link to down below, but it's always interesting when I'm experiencing things in my life that echo the challenges my clients are facing, because there's kind of more of a— not more of, but there's a depth of resonance emotionally with what they're saying, because I'm either going through it, or have gone through it, or really hit the ground from it and have risen up and stood up and spoken up for myself. That's where I'm coming from today.

Let's talk about how a dramatic change can change you for the better. I'm talking about ... just to frame it here ... I'm talking about not only change that's dramatic that you choose, but also change that knocks you to your knees, that you didn't expect, that blindsided you. That crisis moment where there's a breakdown moment that allows the breakthrough to happen. It's both kinds of change, because even when you have actively pursued and wanted some form of significant change, it still rocks you. It still can be incredibly challenging and hard, even though you said you wanted it.

I mean, what comes to mind right this second is, any of you had a baby recently? I planned for both my children. My husband and I planned carefully, and yet it still is such a magnificently powerful experience to have a child, give birth to a child, or bring a child home after you've adopted a child, that it changes every piece of who you are. Every piece of your identity. I'm talking about that kind of change.

For those of you who are having a hard time now with change, I'm praying that this is going to be really helpful. Let's start with how it teaches you who you really are, dramatic change, okay? All right, so if I even think about my own life, some of you know I recently divorced after 27 years of marriage and 33 years of being together. While that was a planned event on both my ex's part and mine, it changes everything about a person in terms of— well, not everything, but it changes how the world sees you, it changes how you see yourself.

I feel like finding brave after divorce is another book, book number three maybe I need to write after I figure it out. But that's where I'm coming from right now, big change. Think about any big change that you're going through, whether it's you've lost your job, or you desperately want a new job, but you feel stuck, or something really challenging has happened in your health or your relationships or with someone you love. Think about all of that.

What does it teach you? I think the first thing is when you are on the other side of it, you are able to see the brilliance of who you are, and your strength and capabilities in a brand new light.

I mean, briefly, the reality is, when we stay in a status quo mode, when we're not growing, when things are not changing, when we're not juggling new things that we never thought we had to face, we don't really understand what we're capable of.

It's dramatic change that shows you how strong you really are, how capable, how resourceful, how brilliant, how compassionate. It teaches you about yourself in a completely new frame, because there's a new lens in terms of what you're experiencing in your life, so it teaches you who you really are that you didn't understand, right?

The second thing you learn through huge, dramatic change is that you see that you're capable of overcoming challenges you never thought you would. If we even talk about change in relationships, I talk to people literally every single week, and my sweet spot in working with people is mid-life, mid-career women, say 35 to 55. I can't tell you how many are stuck in unhappy relationships, unhappy jobs, they're dealing with toxicity, they're not being treated the way they want, they are not experiencing love and connection the way they dreamed they would. Hard, hard stuff, right?

But I would say a great majority of them aren't quite ready yet to do the brave thing about it, and that's why they come to coaching and that's perfectly fine, but those people who have said, "You know what? I've had it. I'm taking control.

I'm moving beyond how this feels." When they get to the other side of that, then they really see how strong they are to overcome other challenges in their life. They see that they're a strong, resourceful, powerful individual, where before the dramatic change, they didn't really recognize that.

The third thing big change does to you, if you handle it the right way, is you also see clearly who your friends are. That was a huge revelation to me when my now ex and I were moving out of our home, and we had a big home and a big property, and we had only three weeks to move out because we got an offer we had to say yes to. Oh my goodness, the amount of physical work was beyond anything I'd ever experienced. It was not just physical work, it was emotional work.

So yes, we packed up a lot of the kids' stuff, the kids who are now 20 and 23, but I had boxes and tubs of their most beautiful artwork, which, of course, as a mom you think every scribble is beautiful. I had pictures and clothes and you know what I mean. I hadn't gotten rid of all that. Well, we had taken a pass at decluttering, but then we had to cut down to the bone, because we were both moving to smaller places.

It was so much work that by the time the deadline came for us to be out of the house, we were not going to be ready. You really see who your friends are. The people that will come over and move shit.

Can I say the word? Stuff out of your house into the garage so the house will be empty, that's a friend. That's not a fair-weather friend who just wants to go out drinking, or do fun stuff with you, that's a friend. A friend that you need to keep close, who will come to your house.

We had one neighbor, Dave, who couldn't help us the night before when we reached out, but he came over at 5:00 in the morning, and he worked for two hours simply moving, physically moving stuff out of our house. I mean, I will never forget that. That is a friend.

Think about who are your real friends? Who would come to your aid when it's the most unglamorous, awful work in the world to help you? Who would do that, and who wouldn't? Sometimes you don't know until you ask, but I sure saw more clearly who my real friends are.

The fourth thing it teaches you is how to deal with people's negativity and judgments and projections in a more life-affirming way. I mean, when I said, "I'm divorced," or, "I'm getting divorced," you wouldn't believe the responses. The responses I saw were projections of other people's beliefs and values right on me, smack, smack, right on me.

Some people cried, and I said, "Why are you crying?" In a few cases, the people themselves were crying for themselves. I think in some ways, because they wish they could be strong enough to do that, or they were so sad in their own marriage that it just made them cry. Or very conservative views about what divorce is, that you're shameful, you're sinful, you're going to go to hell. Wow.

When you do something that is brave and dramatically different from what people are used to seeing you as, you're going to get a lot of judgments. I just wrote a post on how to know when you should not take advice, and it all ties into the same thing. People will put on you all sorts of things they think is right, but really none of it has to do with you. None of it. In other words, what someone puts on you that feels negative, feels judgmental and critical and squashing and suppressing and limiting is not about you, it's about them.

In order to do this big, brave thing and deal with big change, you have to get stronger. You have to build a stronger boundary, and understand that the difference between you and other people, where you end and other people begin. That's a boundary. Or you need to say, "No. Thank you for your input, but I don't see it that way at all." Then you have to be able to walk away, you know? Big change teaches you that.

Finally, the fifth thing that big change brings about if we let it, is that you become much more nimble and flexible and open to change in the future.

When you've had big change foisted on you, and you've survived it, and you've actually grown from it, and you become a happier, richer ... richer I mean emotionally ... more powerful, more empowered, more confident person, then you're not so scared of change. You're like, "Okay, well that didn't break me, and in fact, I really love who I've become, more than had I not made this change, or had this change not happen to me."

I mean, every single big change in my life has done that for me, whether it was right after 9/11 getting laid off, one month after moving into a bigger home, and bigger financial responsibility. I mean, that took me a long time to get over, and it broke me because I didn't understand how to address change the way I do now. When you do address it in a life-affirming way, you begin to welcome change. It becomes more of an adventure rather than something you dread and you're so scared of.

I speak to professionals every day who have to make change. They're older, their career is evaporating, or they can't continue with the pace of their job, or a million reasons why in mid-life or later we want to change. Most of them are so petrified, and that's so hard because when we're petrified of change, then we stay way too long in situations that hurt us, and that's where the real damage comes.

Let me talk a little bit about how you can be resilient after dramatic change, how you can embrace the difference in your identity, how you can embrace it as an adventure in discovering that true, authentic identity, how you can use it to enrich your life, even though in the moment it might seem horrifically challenging. Okay, so let me just offer a few strategies I hope will be helpful. They have helped me, I can say, and they've helped my clients.

The first is, let's say it's dramatic change that's being foisted on you. Let's say it's health. Let's say it's you lose your job. Let's say your spouse wants a divorce and you didn't think you did, right? Let's say it's a catastrophic injury. I think the very first thing you have to really work hard on is not break yourself against it.

By that I mean if the change occurs— let me give a less emotional example, but I got laid off after being promised the moon, after being promised by a very senior leader, "Buy the biggest house you can. You have a great, long career here." Then I get laid off. It was one month after 9/11. I moved in in August with my family, one month later was 9/11, and one month later I got laid off.

I felt betrayed, and brutally let down, and worse than that really. What I did was break myself against it. I had been so overly attached to this job that I didn't like, and I was attached because I thought it was the only thing that I could have. I mean, I didn't understand.

I didn't understand who I was and what I was capable of and what I really wanted. I didn't honor any of that. Who I was then is a perfect recipe for misery through change. If this resonates with anyone, let me know. Click on over and write me an email at kathy@kathycaprino.com. Love to hear from you, and I'd love to help you.

What you don't want to do is break yourself against the change, and feel like a horrific loser, and feel flattened that you're a nobody and have nothing to offer and this will never get better and the world is just upside down. Sure, we're going to have moments of that, absolutely, but make them moments, not months and years, right? Really try hard not to go down the rabbit hole of, "I'm awful. I'm nothing. I'm a loser. I'm incompetent." All of that. "I'm not worthy. I'm not lovable." Really try to look at your thoughts around this change.

The second thing is do your best not to wallow in, "God, this is unfair." You know, that concept of fairness, I don't think it really works too well in life. Is it fair that someone is smoted down in the prime of their life? Is it fair that these terrible things happen? I feel like that concept isn't helpful.

What it is is life, and we all have our own beliefs. Some have spiritual beliefs, some don't, about why things happen, and do they happen for a reason or not. My personal belief is things do happen for a reason. Even if they're horrific, there is a reason to it that our higher soul knows, but our personality level, our ego level, our individual level living right now in this dimension doesn't comprehend. Oops, that's for another podcast if you're interested.

When we think, "That is so unfair," what we do then is stay locked in a victim mode. That's what unfair is. "That's unfair that she did that to me. That's unfair I got laid off. That's unfair, that's unfair, that's unfair."

In my case, I did something about it. I went to a lawyer, and it all went very well after that. That's all I'll say. Don't stay in a victim mode. If you feel something's unfair, then pursue a way to rectify it. Go to a lawyer. Stand up for yourself. Seek support that's a higher level than you have.

Do something about it, but don't stay locked in that box of, "Life is so unfair, and I'm a victim," because really, I mean, ask yourself this question. "Did we come to this planet at this time to be a victim our whole lives?" I don't think so. I don't think that's why we made it here to this planet. I think we came here to overcome our limitations, our power gaps, our fears, our self-hatred, our self-rejection, our lack of esteem, our lack of worthiness.

We didn't come here to live our whole lives with that. That's my belief. I feel that if you say all the time, "It's not fair," it's really important that you shift out of that and not use that frame to judge what's happening to you.

The third way that I've seen that we can be resilient in the face of dramatic change and actually use it, use it to better ourselves, and strengthen ourselves, and to grow and to find love and find success and build it and build happiness and build partnerships and friendships who love us, who will support us, all of that, is healing your inner pessimist.

There's a lot been written about optimism and pessimism. There was one study that showed I think that as early as five years old, we can see signs in children of pessimism. Another way people talk about it is, "The glass is half empty, versus half full."

I know about myself, I have quick access to joy. I can't stay mad, and I can't stay unhappy too long. It's just not my makeup. Other people struggle with that. They struggle with depression, it's their makeup. They go to the depressive place. I don't mean to throw all that into one basket and talk about it all in the same way, but I would say to you if you wake up every day with a pessimistic frame, I would ask you to gain greater awareness of your thoughts and your mood and understand that you are not your thoughts. Your thoughts don't control you unless you let your thoughts control you.

There have been times when I'm going through a huge change, and even other times, where I'm a little in the rain for me. I think the barometric pressure really bothers me. I feel lousy. I feel downright lousy, physically and emotionally. Then the next day when there's azure blue sky, and those puffy white clouds, and the sun is shining, I'm like, "Woo wee," happiest person in the world. Completely different mood, and I'm aware of that about myself.

If that's you, or if you wake up one day and the mood is hit, and you're in a downward spiral, what I would ask you to do is take control of yourself. There are many ways to do that, but one of them is, what do you do that works to intervene when you're in a downward spiral?

For me for instance, getting more exercise or meditating or taking some deep breaths or taking a walk in nature or spending time with my goofy beagle, Lily, who is just all love. I have ways to intervene when I go to the pessimistic, dark place, which we all do. My mother used to say, "Anyone who's always happy is an idiot." While that's not very kind, I think the flip side of that is, or the nicer way to say that is, "We're human, and we're going to have down moments and down times. We're not always going to be the picture of sunny happiness."

My question to you is, what do you do that allows you to feel what you need to feel? This is not about suppressing yourself and pretending you don't feel sad and down and worthless. We have those moments, but how do you address them, and how do you make sure that, yes, you're allowing yourself to feel, but you're not going down that pessimistic rabbit hole that's even darker and harder to climb out of.

One tip I would share is be aware of your thoughts, and when you have a depressive thought, one that makes you feel worse, look at the emotion behind your thought. If I say— let's say as a newly single person, "I'll never meet anyone who will make me happy as a partner." If I say that long enough, I'm depressed.

It has an emotion behind it. It has helplessness. It has loss of faith. It has an energy of it. Look at the literal emotions of your thoughts and stop, stop the rat race. Sit with yourself, and feel your emotions, and then ask yourself, "What are the emotions behind those thoughts?"

Then we learned in therapy training, there's something called a reframe. How can you tell the story in a way that fits the facts equally well, but allows for more hope, more positivity, more expansion, more excitement? We don't want you to lie, we don't want to be in denial and just say, "It's going to be all right, it's going to be all right, it's going to be all right," when you don't think it's going to be all right.

No, we want you to have great awareness, but you can tell a different kind of story that has a different energy around it, like, "Yes, I'm single now, and that opens the door to find someone amazing who I can share my life with, who I'm going to be thrilled and feel blessed to do that."

Do you feel the difference in the energy? Even as I say it, I'm talking faster, I'm smiling more. There's a completely different energy. Just get intimately familiar with yourself, with your thoughts and with your emotions, and you can't do that

if you're never in touch with yourself, if you're never quiet, if you never sit quietly and just listen to yourself.

You know, coaching teaches us, and I really believe this, you have everything it takes inside of you to make change, to make positive change, but most of us aren't aware of it. We're not aware of the resourcefulness and the tools and the amazing gifts and talents that we have that we can leverage. I'm asking you to start being aware of what you have inside of you to change how you are responding to this dramatic change.

It's always funny. I'm looking at the clock, because I don't want to go over 30 minutes, and I always think, "Oh, how can I talk for 30 minutes?" And then, "Woo, there it is." 25 minutes almost.

All right, the fourth way that I would love to talk about in terms of how do we grow and expand ourselves and feel more love and more life and more happiness and more power and purpose and meaning and success, all of that stuff that we want, how do we do that in the face of dramatic change that we either did want or did not want?

The fourth thing is, think about what's happening. Let's say this is something that you didn't think you wanted, a really dramatic change. You got laid off, you got fired, you're not going to be able to do your work anymore. A person you love left you, and you thought you were going to be there with them forever. Think about it, and ask yourself this, "What if this ended up being the best thing that has ever happened to me?" What would have to be different for that to be the case?

The most concrete example I can give you from my life is, I got laid off from my vice presidency, and I felt like my life had ended. I mean, I just, I couldn't believe it, because I had set it up so that I was working close to home and my kids were little and it was making great money and it wasn't working 24/7. I thought, "Ugh, this is the best I can do and it fits."

Well, it didn't fit. It was horrifically not fitting, but I didn't want to face it. When you look back— so that was right after 9/11, so what are we talking? 16 years? 17 years? 16 years, I guess. Where I'm sitting right now, I'm not remotely the person I was back then. Running my own business, loving what I do every single day, having— I teach in my amazing career project course about what people want more of, and I love to just break things down into digestible bits.

There's about eight categories that I hear over and over what people want more of. I hear it every day. There's other categories too, but this is what I hear. "I want more flexibility. I want more control. I want more love. I want more authority. I want more responsibility. I want more money. I want more connection." And there's a few more. You can reach out to me and let me know if you want to know more about those.

For me, and I would ask every one of you to think of this question, "What do you want more of? What's the top of your list, the top three things you want more of?" Sometimes if we want all 10 of those, they can't mutually exist together. For me, I wanted more control, more flexibility, and more presence with my family and in my life. Those were the things I wanted, and I could never get them in the corporate world. I couldn't do it. Not saying you can't, I just couldn't.

The fourth thing was purpose. I felt incredibly purposeful in raising my children, but I had zero meaning and contributive value and purpose in my work. Zero. I just hated it. It wasn't serving any purpose, so I didn't want to get to the end of my life having spent so many millions of hours— is it millions? Thousands? Thousands of hours doing work that had no contributive value in the world. To me, that was not a life well lived.

I ask you to think what do you want more of? Is it meaning? Is it purpose? Is it passion? Is it control? Is it love? Is it health? Is it money?

Back to my initial question, what would have to happen after this dramatic change occurs that would make you say, "That was the best damn thing that ever happened to me?"

Well, for me, I went out and claimed what was meaningful and purposeful and necessary in my life. I launched my own business as a therapist and as a writer and as a coach and a speaker and a trainer. It was hard. It is hard. It's not a walk in the park, but because I love it and it brings my life so much meaning, and it's given me control— I mean, one thing, does this resonate with you?

I would absolutely despise it when I'd come to my corporate VP job, and our calendars were all online, so people could book us in meetings. My day would be booked from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 by other people. I had no say in it. I was expected to attend, and this company would have 50 people at a meeting. I'm like, "What a ridiculous waste of time. Ugh."

Have you ever sat in your corporate office and thought, "This is the craziest, most ludicrous thing I've ever seen?" If you feel that, you have to change. You have to change your employer, change your job, change your career, you got to make a change.

I would think, "What? I just walked in the door and my day is booked from 9:00 to 5:00." I had no control, I had no voice, I had no flexibility. Now I have all of that. Yeah, there's downsides too. I don't have a regular paycheck, but I would gladly, freely give that up to have the control and the presence to live the life I want.

Think about that, will you? The dramatic change you're going through. I know it's hard. I know it pushed you to your knees, but think about that question. What if this were the best thing that ever happened to me in my life? What would have to happen? What would I have to do? What would have to come into my life for me to say that was the truth?

There you go, my friends. This is at the vortex of brave. How do we look at crises? I wrote a book on it, [*Breakdown, Breakthrough: The 12 Hidden Crises Working Women Face*](#). Check that out. How do we look at crises and not say, "Life is so darn unfair?"

How do we look at it and say, "Okay, wow. Yikes. That was not what I was expecting. Hmm, but I'm going to make this an adventure. I'm going to make this an adventure. I'm going to learn who I really am and who my friends are and what I'm capable of and what my amazing talents and gifts are that the world wants me to use, that the universe wants me to use that I'm not using. How is this going to be a good thing?" I promise you when you stay with that frame, your life with change for the better.

Thanks, everybody. I'd love to hear what you think. Share with me on my [Finding Brave Facebook](#) page. That's Finding Brave Today. Share with me what's the dramatic change you're going through. Ask me questions, I would love to help you if I can. Share. Share with everybody. Say it out loud, "This is what I went through, this is what I'm going through, and this is how I need help." Share it there. I would love to be of help to you and I hope this has given you a big boost of brave, and that that bravery will change your life. Thanks everybody, and I'll see you next time.

Thanks so much for joining us today, and please don't forget to check out findingbrave.org for more programs, resources, and tips. Tune in next time for your weekly dose of *Finding Brave*.