



## **Transcript of “Hacking Happiness with Stella Grizont”**

Bulletproof Radio podcast #91



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Dave: Today's cool fact of the day is about butterflies in your stomach. You owe it to yourself to pay attention to butterflies in your stomach, because whether they happen when you see someone you're attracted to or when you're about to go onstage to give a public presentation, it's actually a stress response that's caused by adrenaline. It is one of the ways that you can know that your body's fight or flight response is kicking in.

When your brain perceives a potential threat, it's going to increase its alertness by raising your heart rate, your blood pressure and the rate that you're breathing. The nervous system also stimulates your adrenals to get cortisol and adrenaline going, which is what's going to turn you into kind of a little sweaty person before you go out onto stage or before you go out onto, say, your date.

Your muscle tension that you feel, especially in your stomach, is going to keep you alert and the sweat that's now soaking your armpits is actually what helps to cool the body down as you get ready to fight or run away. This is an evolutionary response, but it's kind of annoying and it all starts with that feeling of butterflies in your stomach.

Don't ignore them. Pay attention to them and train them.

Hey everyone, it's Dave Asprey, Bulletproof executive with Bulletproof Executive Radio. Oh, wait. That's kind of a creative name I came up with there, but, oh well, let's keep going.

Today's guest is kind of interesting because she's going to tell us what would you do if an ice cream truck showed up outside your door and you were told to get inside and scream as part of a team-building exercise.

Stella Grizont is the founder and CEO of Woopaah and she's going to answer that question for us. But first I want to say thanks. We just made



number one on iTunes. I'm really stoked. We've had more than three million downloads and I'm just grateful for all the support. If you like this show, please click "like" on iTunes and just let other people know that we're creating some awesome content.

Stella, who you just heard in the background there, is the CEO and founder of Woopaah, and she makes happiness and well-being learning programs for businesses, including Columbia University, City of New York, and she's had a really good career coaching 1,200 women entrepreneurs and having national impact on happiness, which is really kind of cool. We talk about butter and coffee and stuff like that a lot, but I wanted to have Stella on to talk about A, women and B, happiness.

Stella, welcome to the show and it's a pleasure to have you on.

Stella: So happy to be on. Thank you.

Dave: Is it true that you have a Masters in Applied Positive Psychology from U Penn?

Stella: It is true. It is true. People are like, "What? You got a Masters in the science of happiness?" And I'm like, "Yes, I do." Isn't it the most awesome thing? What more fun thing could you study? Happiness, that's just...

Dave: I went to U Penn, I went to Wharton.

Stella: Oh, yes.

Dave: The problem is, I studied negative psychology. What's the difference between psychology and positive psychology in a degree? I'm actually kind of curious about that.

Stella: Really good question. That's what I get all the time. They're like, "Positive psychology, as opposed to negative psychology?" Actually, kind of yes. Psychology today, which is only about a hundred or so year science, is an empirical investigation of what's wrong with people and how do we fix it. It takes people from negative ten to zero. It's come up with all sorts of great diagnoses and solutions for mental illness, for

problems. Positive psychology asks the question, what's right with people and how do we amplify it? What makes life worth living and how do we create positive interventions to help people really get from zero to plus ten.

Dave: That was elegantly stated. I imagine you've said that before.

Stella: I have said that several times.

Dave: I love that line of thinking because I almost wanted to say, "What do you mean, what's wrong with people?" There generally isn't that much wrong with you. The fact that you're not doing as well as you could do doesn't mean there's anything wrong. It has to do with how you see yourself and how you see the world. Changing your mindset is cool, but I did not know until we started checking you out to qualify you to be on the show that, oh, Positive Psychology as a degree is kind of cool. Why did you decide to be one of the first 150 people to get this degree? It's kind of like, "I'm going to have a career in positive psychology. Corporations are hiring, I'm going to get a job." What was the deal there? Why?

Stella: It's just like it's what I was meant to do. I was like the go-to friend who everyone would go ask love advice or, "What should I do to get a promotion?", or "How do I deal with this problem?" Ever since being ten on the playground, that was just so evident, and I loved helping people. When I stumbled across this degree, I just thought, oh my God, this is it. I have to go for it. It was definitely something I just thought, that's for me.

Dave: It's awesome that you figured that out. I, like the month I was graduating for my undergrad, my six-year, four-year-degree, I got a degree in information systems. I was like, "Wait. They have something called Cognitive Studies? That's the coolest thing ever. I totally want to do that," but it was too late, so I went off and got a job and started companies and stuff like that. Kudos to you for figuring out a degree that you felt was your calling and you went for it. You've taken that, amplified the message pretty well for entrepreneurs, which is another thing we have in common. We both work on that.

Stella: Yeah.

Dave: I want to talk about what do you learn in this program? What have you learned in your practice? Why is it important to focus on increasing your well-being? What do you get out of it?

Stella: Good question. The first thing that, I guess, big, big, macro-tech take-aways is one, we learn that happiness is really powerful. Having amplified positive emotions has proven to extend your life. There's a study that followed older men over the age of 65 for two years and what they found after two years is that the men who reported being happier were twice as likely to be alive than those who weren't. This has been replicated in a lot of different ways. One, positivity just lengthens your life, which is pretty awesome. It heightens your immunity. I'm sure you've heard of the study where they put people into a hotel and they quarantined them and they gave everyone the common cold and injected them with a cold, and then ...

Dave: That was my last job,

Stella: You're making people sick for a week and then you measure their snot and you measure their symptoms and what they found is that people who came in with a more positive mindset experienced fewer symptoms. There's a whole load of great bio-awesome benefits for positivity.

On a professional front, we find that people are 30 to 50 percent more productive at work, their free time's more creative because they literally see more. There's a really cool study, which is one of my favorite, where they had people hooked up to eye-tracking devices, and I know you've done all sorts of interesting studies ...

Dave: I'm going right here, can you ...

Stella: I wouldn't be surprised. They hooked people up to eye-tracking devices and they simulated a negative experience. They showed the all sorts of negative, sad, depressing movies, and they showed another group all sorts of happy, uplifting movies and images. What they found is that the

participants who were in a negative mood, they found that their eyes when looking at a picture, tended to stay in the center and just stay in one particular area. Whereas the people who were in a positive mood, their eyes tended to first go around the periphery of the image and then kind of all over inside, so literally you see the big picture. Your vision, literally and figuratively, is affected when you're experiencing more positivity.

It also makes you look hotter, which I know is also very important to your readers.

Dave: I've been working on it, but my [inaudible 00:09:12] failing utterly. I don't know what's going on there. I'll tell you when I get that one.

Stella: It's found that when people see an authentic smile and people really can sense our energy and where we're at. When you're not in a good mood, people kind of want to stay away from you. They don't really want to be in connection with you, whereas if you're in a positive mood or you're happy, that draws people in. We know from your neurons that also, people begin to actually feel your positivity and mimic it [inaudible 00:09:51] from there.

Dave: I got to challenge you a little bit there.

Stella: Yes, please.

Dave: People can sense your energy. All right, so you've got a degree in Positive Psychology, so you're already not a real scientist. I don't believe that, but that's the stereotype, right?

Stella: Okay.

Dave: How do we know people can sense each other's energy? Do you actually study that? Are there experiments? How does all that work?

Stella: Yeah. When it comes to negative emotion, we can, there's things that we can see that we're not always conscious of. For example, there's a study, it's not coming to top of mind in terms of who did the study, but what they did is they had people, again, watch sad movies and then they had

someone come into the laboratory and observe that person, and they had someone watch happy movies and be in a positive mood, and observe that person. What they would find is that the person who was observing the person who was experiencing the mood shifts would report that person as more likable, they would report that person as someone who was more attractive or less attractive. In that respect, you can observe certain things and how they observe them, there are studies about electromagnetic fields. I'm not an expert on that at all.

Dave: Do you think they're real or is that BS? I've got to know.

Stella: Do I think they're real? Absolutely, because I just do.

Dave: I do, too. I've seen some of the studies and know some of the guys who do the research. Heartmath Institute and I think you can actually control that stuff. I love it.

Stella: That's still kind of what I was trying to say first, is that what I learned is that happiness is important. The other thing that I learned is that happiness is not an illness and that's where the conversation about well-being takes over. The problem with a lot of, especially in America, is that we think we're always supposed to be happy and that happiness is "the" destination and that we should all strive to be happy.

Being happy is really awesome, but the problem with happiness is that it's transient. It's based on emotions, which never stay around. They're always kind of fluid and moving. The other problem with happiness is that if all we cared about was being happy, we probably would never have children, we probably would never take care of the elderly, and we probably wouldn't take classes or do experiences that may challenge us into extreme discomfort, but that might end up helping us grow in pretty phenomenal ways.

Dave: They call that the Land of the Lotus-Eaters, in whatever book that is. I think it was Gulliver's Travels, right? The idea of people like, "Oh, we're happy all the time," and you've probably seen that in your favorite yoga teacher. They're a couple minutes late to yoga class, and they're super happy, but they're kind of getting by and, by the way, I've done yoga for



a long time. I love yoga teachers, but you can be so far on the happiness spectrum that you're maybe not addressing other things that you needed to do.

Stella: Totally.

Dave: I hear what you're saying there.

Stella: Totally. You just want to account for other things, like when you're not necessarily feeling off-the-charts positive. There's other things going on in your life that you want to consider, such as your relationships, your sense of meaning to something bigger than yourself, your engagement in your work, your sense of accomplishment. Those are all things that we track when we think about well-being and positive psychology. Paying attention to those things, I think, in addition to your general positivity is, kind of gets you to where you want to be versus just observing your emotions.

Dave: What is the role of status in happiness? We talk about being happy, but there's the happy guy living under the bridge. Maybe he's genuinely happy and it's totally possible and there's guys like Richard Dawkins who've achieved enlightenment, allegedly, while living in a park. There's also guys who have everything, you know, social figures and people who are just so well-respected, Oprah Winfrey or something like that.

Stella: Yeah.

Dave: What is the spectrum between economically having it or just socially having the status and not having it? How does that affect our happiness as well as just our positivity?

Stella: By status, do you mean automatically, is that with wealth?

Dave: No, their socio-economic status. You can have a lot of influence and not a lot of money; you can have a lot of money and not a lot of influence, but people generally have enough money and a lot of influence. I don't know what to call that.

Stella: Okay.

- Dave: We can separate them out if you want. We could just talk about status and wealth independently. Is that a good question?
- Stella: If I was to bring in some studies, there's some studies that talk about each of those things separately, and then I can just comment. There is some research on does money buy you happiness and what we found is that up to a certain point, it does. The last I looked, it was \$66,000, which is just enough to keep your basic needs met, so homes, in certain parts of the country. Basically that implies once you have the basic necessities in life, increase in income doesn't necessarily mean increase in happiness. Sure, it will buy you maybe a better yoga class, but you still have to go to the yoga class and embody the lessons of the yoga class. It's not going to get you into that kind of level of peacefulness. It's not going to bring you that peacefulness.
- Dave: In the Bay area, like in San Francisco, you need \$66,000 a month to be happy, but what about the rest of country?
- Stella: I don't know if that ...
- Dave: I'm just kidding. No, it's per month, not per year. All right, so 66K on an average thing, and above that what happens? You make \$76,000, that extra \$10,000 doesn't move the positivity or the happiness needle at all?
- Stella: What the research says is that it doesn't get you, it doesn't continue to grow at the same level as your income. Maybe you continue to get little increments only more happy, maybe you go on more vacations, you can spend more time with your friends, but it doesn't move one-for-one with your increase in wealth.
- Dave: You get one positive point for every dollar up to \$66,000, above that you only get half a positive point for every dollar, and it gets smaller with time. It drops off. Okay.
- Stella: I don't know the numbers exactly, but yeah, that's the gist. When it comes to status, it's interesting because there's some interesting research on control, and when you have a lot of status and control, you tend to be doing a lot better than the people who feel they don't have

control. In fact, people who feel like they don't have control and influence actually live shorter lives. I would imagine that status does bring you a level of life satisfaction because you feel like you have a lot of control, but I don't know if it necessarily gives you all the other things like really rich, nurturing relationships or a sense of meaning and purpose.

Dave: You can't buy that, you just have to rent it.

Stella: Yeah. That's a good side business.

Dave: Let's talk about that a little bit. It's a good joke, but the idea that, you said earlier, that happiness is fleeting. You can have some happiness, but whether or not you're making \$66,000 or \$46,000 or \$86,000 or whatever. What percentage of time should you be positive, because are you going to have positive without negative? How would you even know what your positive is? What's the ratio I should be targeting?

Stella: First let's start with this idea of a negativity bias, which you're familiar with, right?

Dave: Sure, but let's assume someone listening in their car isn't, so run us through it.

Stella: Exactly. Negativity bias essentially says that our brains have a natural instinct to pay attention to anything that's bad, negative or threatening. That's just where our attention goes first. Even in our memory recall, it's much easier for us to retrieve memories that are negative than those that are positive, so we have this bias towards the negative. Because it's so strong, in order for us to actually live life not like a zero sum game but have a positive experience, we want to almost overcompensate with a positive emotion. The general rule sum is that you want to experience three times the amount of positivity for one experience of negativity or negative emotions.

What I want to underscore is that negative emotions aren't bad. You just want to keep them in check. That's kind of another problem, that people think with positive psychology or happiness it's all yellow smiles. No,

it's not like yellow smiley face, it's actually just learning the skills to flourish within a life experience where shit hits the fan.

Dave: A lot of people would argue that you want to be happy three quarters of the time, but they don't necessarily feel in control of their happiness. Like, okay, I went on four dates. Three bad ones, I was unhappy and one good one, I was happy. How am I to know what the date's going to be like, because I just met them on some dating site, or whatever, but how do you control whether you have happiness three quarters of the time or not?

Stella: Good question. I bring everything back to attention. I describe your life experiences like being in the director's seat and you get to point the camera wherever you want to create the movie that you want. We could have a scene and have three different directors create three different movies. Just based on where they point the camera they tell different stories. I believe that everything comes down to where you point your attention. If you have three bad date, one good date, well, you can focus your attention on what did you learn about yourself in each of those dates that's helping you clarify your ideal partner, because had you maybe not had those dates, you might have not realized you had certain needs. Maybe you learned how to be great at breaking up, which is a good skill. I'm sure there's things to appreciate about the negative stuff.

Dave: That sounds like a practice of gratitude, frankly.

Stella: That is a practice of gratitude.

Dave: What I'm hearing there, then, is in order to be happy, you should practice gratitude. Am I putting words in your mouth or is that kind of ...

Stella: Not at all. That is definitely one thing you want to practice for sure. I see gratitude as the gateway emotion and if you practice enough gratitude, it kind of opens you up on the continuum of positivity and it's just an easier thing to access. Gratitude is easier sometimes for people than love or peace or wonder, so gratitude's a nice one to get in the flow.

Dave: Got it. When that happens, then other more positive emotions happen that are maybe harder to access for the average person. How much control do we really have over our emotional state?

Stella: Awesome question. Actually, there's a formula that researchers have found, that when it comes to having control over our happiness, that 10% of our happiness is just based on life circumstances, which are out of our control. We can't control the fact that we were born to certain parents, or we born in a certain time or a certain country. Those things we can't control, that's 10%. Forty percent is accounted for our genetics, which, although I know you've been sharing some really cool information on how we can control what DNA is expressed and we do talk about that a little bit in my class about love and fear but, for the most part, we have a general set point when it comes to our personalities, and that's just genetic. Again, some people are just born a little bit more grumpy, some are born a little more effervescent and they have a set point and they can move the needle.

That's 50% percent, so the remaining 40% is where we do have control in our happiness. That 40% is based on what we actually do, the choices that we make, the place where we point the camera. That's the place where we get to work and [pray 00;23:49] on a daily basis and practice, hopefully, having a good outcome.

Dave: You are a believer in the set point theory of happiness as a genetic determinant

Stella: I am a believer that we do come in with a certain disposition, yes.

Dave: Can it be changed?

Stella: I believe it can be changed, yeah.

Dave: You can move your set point. Cool. I was hoping you would say that. If not, I was going to have an interesting question to you. I changed my Myers-Briggs type with neuro-feedback, for instance. I think a lot of mindfulness and awareness practices over time will even you out and you can just move from one part to the other and what appears to be set

maybe isn't set if you can dig deep enough. That said, if you have a deficiency in manufacturing a neurotransmitter, you might just tend towards a certain direction and that's just how it's going to be.

Stella: I definitely believe you can do so much transformational work. Did you intentionally with your Myers-Briggs say, "I want to change this into this?"

Dave: No, I just did it and then I did a bunch of personal growth stuff. My \$300,000 of bio-hacking and lots of different things. I happened to notice when I did it at a corporate event later, I'm like, "Wow. That doesn't really look the same." A lot of the attitudes that come in towards being judgmental or analytical, I tended to score pretty high on those and I'm actually not remembering my current type, but what I found was that I tended to be very near the middle on almost everything when I was done. I was almost flexible to move from this side to that side ...

Stella: That's cool.

Dave: Has been really beneficial. It's helped me put myself in other people's shoes, and even when I do public speaking or hosting the show or writing a blog post, I find it's really easy to go between the two sides, there were the four directions in trying to use language that isn't going to set off any one side and sort of cut a quarter or half the audience from hearing the message so they can at least access it and then make a decision as to whether they want to use it or throw it away or whatever else. If I can't get past the built-in filters, it seems like people don't even have a chance to read it.

Stella: That's awesome.

Dave: Let's say that I'm feeling really sad because I just got rejected. I asked for a raise, my boss said no. I asked the pretty girl out on a date and she said no, and she said not only no but, "I wouldn't date your brother," and whatever else. You're having a really bummed-out day and you get in a car accident, so you're experiencing a lot of painful emotion ...

Stella: Knock on wood.

Dave: What do you do? It's just been a shitty day. Pardon the French. Walk me through what to do about that. I want to be one of those 75-25 happy people.

Stella: Where I always like to start is with where you are, so I think it's really important to just be present for how are you feeling right now. I think so many people want to distract themselves from that feeling of shittiness because it just doesn't feel good, so we want to distract ourselves. Maybe we have a drink or we go shopping or we just work really hard or we go on the Internet. What you want to do is kind of just recognize, "Wow. I'm having a really shitty day." Sometimes that actually helps by labeling it out loud.

There was an interesting study that found that when MRI patients were about to go into the tube thing, when the operators would ask them how they were feeling, and they actually stated that they were feeling nervous, they found that their anxiety went down faster than with other participants. I also find that to be true for myself and clients that I work with as well. If you're just kind of open with where you are. Outside of your shitty day example, even if you're working with a group of people or you're a manager, if you can start with where you are, then you kind of let down the resistance, because people, again, if they know you well, can probably sense that something's up, so by stating it, you kind of allow yourself to relax and be taken into context. That really helps move things along. I'd label it. That's the first thing I'd do.

Then there's a few interventions that have been studied that work. One intervention that has been proven, I guess sometimes I do it, is fake it. What they found is that, it's the pen study that you put in your mouth, so they had people put a pen in their mouth like this and it's kind of like a fake smile. Then they had people put the pen in their mouth like this. You can't smile. What they found is that when they showed them comics afterwards, that the people who were like this actually found the comics more funny. There is something to say about faking it. You have to internally want to fake it. It has to start intrinsically. For me, if I'm in a really bad mood, if I get dressed, put on my makeup, go to see a friend or something, generally that can help.

The other thing that I've created for people, for myself actually, you mentioned the ice cream truck ...

Dave: I was meaning to ask you about that.

Stella: I was having a really shitty day one day and my boyfriend now has been just moved into my 400-square-foot studio in Manhattan, which also was my office at the time. His socks were in places, there were cords everywhere and my minimalist apartment suddenly was like aah (screams) chaos. There was just a lot going on in my business and my life, and somehow it all just came into that moment where I was feeling so overwhelmed, all I wanted to do was scream.

Now, you're in a Manhattan apartment, there's neighbors everywhere, there's buildings stacked next to each other. If you scream, I'm thinking people are going to think I'm crazy, they're going to call the cops, God knows what's going to happen. Part of me actually paused and that's when, if you have a meditation practice, you can pause and kind of watch your thoughts, and part of me paused and was like, "Don't hold this back and then just hop over and keep going. See what happens if you go through this emotion."

I decided to just let myself scream and beat some pillows, and afterwards I felt giddy and light and it was better than sex. It was just so good. It was such a weight off my chest. For me, what that moment was was just embodying what I was feeling, acknowledging what I was feeling and moving through it. I created a truck to help people do just that more often. Whatever you can do to ...

Dave: This a truck you go into and scream.

Stella: Yes.

Dave: Is it permanent? How do you charge for this?

Stella: Organizations hire us ...

Dave: I'm just kidding.



- Stella: Mostly, if I go out into the community, I do it for free. I just let people come in an experience it. It's like 5% screaming and 95% relaxation and embodiment work.
- Dave: Are they hitting things with sticks, too?
- Stella: They kind of are. Foam noodles.
- Dave: Right, I did something like that once. It felt absurd. It was like this multi-day personal growth retreat. It was really profound. I watched people snap. There was this one grandmother there and she was kind of standing there screaming, and all of a sudden, she really got into it and just demolished her foam noodle. Like, wow, that was one angry woman. She didn't look that angry. It took me like three days to actually scream and mean it. It was definitely not a rational activity in any way, shape or form, but it works.
- Stella: The way I set it up is that it's a playful activity. I don't set it up as a primal therapy at all. It's a way for you to play with what you're experiencing right now and there's an audio experience that guides you through it. There's bright colors.
- Dave: [inaudible 00:33:24] observer in it and little bit of absurdity and being aware.
- Stella: Exactly.
- Dave: I get it. That seems like a cool approach, maybe more mainstream. I'm not into the primal scream kind of thing at all. It's not something that works for me.
- Stella: I'm not either. I think the biggest thing is for you just to be conscious of where you are and don't try to rush out of it, if you could back into your center, breathing, noticing what's good.
- Dave: Okay, so we're feeling really bad, we label it and we admit that we're feeling bad, so you acknowledge an emotion. Then you sort of cultivate an awareness of it as a part of that, and what's the next step there? Scream, maybe?

Stella: It's not like a linear approach. I wish I could say, "Here's a five-step process to unwinding any shitty mood," but it really depends on what's happening for you in the moment. I think that the one thing that's a constant is just really being where you are in that moment, and then if you can, once you acknowledge it and you feel that you want to move towards a more positive state, then I would go towards gratitude. I would go be with a friend, because relationships are actually our number one driver of happiness, even though they may be the cause of the shitty experience. People are really important.

I think when we're in a negative place we begin to feel very isolated and feeling lonely is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you can bring yourself to be with someone else, if you do something nice for someone else, that's another way to kind of get out of your head. Giving and being kind actually stimulates our dopamine. Some people report actually experiencing a helper's high, which means that some people, when they're volunteering, if they're volunteering regularly with a level of frequency, they report feeling less pain, they report feeling stronger. I think the best part of it is that you just forget yourself. If you can just forget yourself and your problems that are in your head and focus on the present moment and being of service, that's a nice way to get out of your funkiness as well.

Dave: I heard do something nice for someone else. You're feeling really crappy, it's, "I'm feeling really crappy, but you like nice today," and that can break your mood.

Stella: Yeah.

Dave: All right, there's a certain number of people who would say ice cream. Ice cream will work. What's your take on the value of food? Is that an emotional eating response? What's the deal there?

Stella: I think everything in perspective.

Dave: Some good ice cream, you're saying.

- Stella: Yes. For the most part, people do tend to emotionally eat and escape into it just like drugs and you don't want that to be your go-to to numb your experience, but sometimes it's hard for you to, you can't go from feeling totally shitty to zippety-doo-dah. You might need to take some micro steps. If you take small steps and if that ice cream is, I don't want to say ice cream is okay, but if in that moment of time if you don't have an eating problem, if you can handle treating yourself without overdoing it, then yeah, go ahead, have an ice cream.
- Dave: Just like six scoops, no more?
- Stella: Some extra hot fudge.
- Dave: It's a slippery slope, I hear you saying. You brought up something else that was my next question. What about pot? It raises alpha waves. Alpha waves, of course, are correlated with happiness. If you're not a daily user and if I'm like, "I had a really crappy day. I think I'm going to hit the bong."
- Stella: I don't have much experience in that category, so I can't really say. I've watched a lot of people important in my life use that as their kind of medicine and I only have a personal opinion about it, which is, you need to be able to deal in the present moment presently. If that substance is taking you out of your body and your ability to be right here and now, then I don't think that's supportive.
- Dave: That sounds almost like a regular psychologist, not a positive psychologist. I don't have a particular, I'm not opposed but I'm not a huge user. I'll eat something with pot in it on a rare occasion at a party just because it's fun, but I can't imagine like, "Oh, I'm feeling really bad, I'm going to have pot." I would be like, "Give me the coffee," but that's just me.
- What about boredom? This is a more slippery one. It's one thing to be like, I was in a car accident and no one likes me and I'm ugly to boot. That was a really extreme example. So now, I have the most boring job ever. In fact, I'll tell you a job I used to have. People don't know this. For five years, I would pack auto parts in boxes in a warehouse.

Stella: Oh my God.

Dave: At the end of high school when I was in college I would pay for my tuition all summer just walking around, pushing a cart. It was the horrible, mindless, just mind-numbing boredom. What is the way to be happy 75% of the time when your job absolutely sucks and it doesn't just suck, it's boring suck.

Stella: Yeah, that's painful. That's painful boring. It's interesting because you know when we say it's going to bore me to death, research has found that that actually has some significant truth to it.

Dave: Like Fox News.

Stella: I don't know if Fox News featured it, but ...

Dave: I'm just kidding. I have no problem with Fox News. I think they even talked about coffee [inaudible 00:39:52].

Stella: I believe it was the Whitehall Study that asked people in the 80s to what degree have you been bored at your job in the past month, and men in 2001, they came back and they analyzed the results and what they found is that people who reported being bored at their jobs were three and a half times more likely to have died of a heart problem. I believe it was three and a half times or three times.

Dave: You can die of a broken heart or a bored heart.

Stella: You can. Because when we're not feeling stimulated or curious, our brain begins to really slow down and it just sucks.

Dave: So Sudoku is the way to solve boredom.

Stella: I've actually never played Sudoku.

Dave: I did it twice and it was like, oh my God, that's so boring. It didn't work for me.

Stella: I see people on the train doing it.

You actually want to take your boredom seriously. If you're feeling really bored, the last thing you want to do is keep checking the clock, because what happens when you're checking the clock is you're focusing on time and you're not focusing on what you're doing.

I'll bring up a little bit of Csikszentmihalyi, who is kind of the godfather of positive psychology. He also coined the term, "flow." Csikszentmihalyi talks about true engagement, which is kind of the opposite end of boredom. True engagement is when we are kind of so lost in the task at hand that we lose a sense of time, we lose a sense of space, we even forget ourselves and kind of our ego, rumination, what stuff means to you. We also are challenging ourselves just enough so that we're out of our comfort zone. We're getting challenged and we're getting feedback on our performance.

There's these aspects that create a sense of engagement. What I ask people to do is like, okay, well how can you challenge yourself as you're pushing the carts or packing the boxes to be a little bit more engaged. How can you make a game out of that experience to improve your performance. Maybe you start to measure how fast each stage takes you and see if you can improve your speed, or maybe at each stop, you make an effort to interact authentically with the person in the warehouse. Ask them how they're doing. See how you can make their life a little bit easier. There's all sorts of micro ways that we can make anything into an engaging task, but it takes some work to really put yourself into it. The last thing you want to do is just keep staring at the clock. You want to see how you can make what you're doing even better.

Dave: That makes sense.

Stella: Or quit.

Dave: Quitting is a great one. For me, what I ended up doing was kind of two things. One was how can I do less of this, so I ended up winning a pretty prestigious award for processing [inaudible 00:43:35] because I was so bored. I had to find something to do.

Stella: There you go.

- Dave: I would play 3D Tetris, so I packed the boxes so heavy no one could move them and then I'd laugh about it, which maybe wasn't the right [inaudible 00:43:44]. It was not a fun experience, but it paid the bills, right?
- Stella: Yeah, but you did something about it. You did your best.
- Dave: We're coming up on the end of the show, and there's a question I've asked everyone who's been on the show. Given everything you know, positive psychology or not, just your own life experience, your top three recommendations for people who want to perform better. If you want to kick ass in life, the three things that you should do according to Stella.
- Stella: Oh my God. Okay, the three things you should do according to me. Oh, wow. One is practice controlling your attention. Again, you are the director of your own movie, so practice where you point the camera. Your attention is that camera. When you're in a shitty situation or you want to perform even better, how else can you look at a situation to come up with an even better idea or a more effective way of doing something or a deeper way of connecting with someone else. That's one.
- The next thing is I would really be aware of you well-being and how you can amplify your well-being, because when you are feeling well, you're performing at 30 to 50 times better. By your well-being, I'm talking about your positivity, your sense of engagement, your relationships, your sense of meaning and your level of accomplishment and mastery.
- The third tip is not to take yourself too seriously. I just [inaudible 00:45:30] take yourself too seriously. Things are always changing and if you can just lighten up and have a little bit more fun and see things as more of a playful experience, then you're more likely to be, like you said, smooth, and be able to be flexible in whatever situation comes up.
- Dave: Very cool, and thank you for sharing those. It's always amazing to hear what different people with different pasts share, and I learn something every time, so much appreciate it.
- Stella: Sure.

- Dave: Stella, thank you for being on the show, and please do tell people where they can learn more about you. I think you have a class you're teaching that's coming up. Tell us about that, give us your URL, book titles, other places that they can connect with you.
- Stella: Yes, absolutely. I just [inaudible 00:46:25] a class if you're interested in learning about the science of happiness, and actually hack your happiness, I have a course on udemy, which is the letter U-D-E-M-Y dot com slash science of happiness and I think we can share that with your readers as well. It takes you through skills on how to hack your negative emotions and support them and deepen those relationships and experience more meaning and make meaning out of struggle and experience higher levels of achievement and mastery. We talk about that and it's all online and you can do it whenever, wherever and I'd love to offer your community 50% off if they'd like to start it now. I believe the new year is the perfect time to kick this off, because when you're more aware of your well-being, then you're more in control of how your life is going and how your performance is going.
- Dave: Well, thank you for that, and tell people how they can get it.
- Stella: If you go onto [udemy.com/science of happiness](https://www.udemy.com/science-of-happiness) and I've made a code just for you guys, it's "bulletproof." That's the code, "bulletproof."
- Dave: That's an easy-to-remember code. I like it.
- Stella: Easy to remember, and if for any reason you cannot remember this information, you're driving, you can email me, I guess this is more information to remember, [Stella@woopaah.com](mailto:Stella@woopaah.com) and I'm happy to answer any questions that you have. That's W-O-O-P-A-A-H.com
- Dave: Stella, thanks a lot.
- Stella: Totally.
- Dave: Everyone, this episode was sponsored by the new Bulletproof upgraded truffled chocolate coffee beans. Actually, it wasn't sponsored, but we just launched them and we ate like half a bag of these things and they're amazing and good and I'm totally buzzing this whole interview. You



could tell I'm really happy, so the trick to happiness for me was truffled chocolate coffee beans made with all my ingredients. I'm jumping up and down. Anyway, Stella, much, much appreciate it. Have an awesome evening.

Stella: Thank you. You, too.

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