

November 2021 Issue 16

The We Turned Out Okay Playbook

by Karen Lock Kolp, M.Ed.

Helping you do what works for you...

Instead of treading the conventional path. Let's jump in!

The Power of Letting Go (of a Grudge, that You Didn't Even Know You Were Holding Onto)

Welcome to Issue 16 of the *We Turned Out Okay Playbook*!

I have forgiven some pretty huge things in my life.

The biggest was forgiving the person who sexually abused me when I was seven years old, and being in a place to wish him well.

I know that that was necessary... for me. Forgiving something so egregious, something that's had repercussions and a massive influence over my entire life, felt easy. I gave that forgiveness freely.

Feeling tons better afterwards was a wonderful and unexpected byproduct.

So I know the power of forgiveness. I've done my best to role-model that for my children, and have generally lived in the belief that "I'm a forgiving person."

There's a saying, "When we think we've got it all under control is when we are most asleep at the switch."

This autumn I awoke slumped over, with that metaphorical switch beneath me. In my sleep I drooled all over the control panel, and now felt the imprint of the switch embedded on my face as I blearily lifted my head.

I was solidly sound asleep at this switch, in a way that has impacted my life for three years now. Three YEARS.

Here's what happened.

I created a podcast for an organization that I care a lot about. The founder and I developed the content together; my kids' instruments appeared in the podcast episodes; my husband was our amazing producer. I brought all my mad creative skills, interviewing guests and going deep.

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I invested lots of my time to make it good. I invested all of my heart and soul to make it beautiful.

Initially it was amazing to be part of a collaborative project that was so cool, and fun. And important.

Then, something changed: a close friend of mine joined the organization. This was amazing, as they brought their Zone of Genius and freed everybody else up to be in their own Zones of Genius, too.

At first I was excited to be collaborating with my friend. When we spoke, messaged, and developed a creative brief together, it seemed as if we were both really on the same page.

But then I started to get feedback, questioning everything about the podcast. It wasn't "tight" enough. It was too long and wandering. Why didn't I have some sort of script to follow, when I was introducing guests? Could we edit out all of the extraneous conversation in each episode? Could we make it more like something you'd hear on NPR?

A bigger problem lay underneath. The sort of podcast I create no longer aligned with the group's vision.

I love the byways and detours that a long and deep conversation brings. I hate scripted, what feels to me like over-edited podcasts.

But they wanted tight and scripted.

My work simply didn't fit the organization.

It would be years before I understood this.

Then came a very bad day, when my friend emailed me and cut my heart out. "Karen, I've taken down the episode that you and Ben put up yesterday. It just didn't fit what we are going for."

I wrote back immediately, "Can we talk right now?" Yes, we could; as soon as we got on the phone I asked "Did we really create something so bad, that you felt it needed to be taken off the Internet?"

Let's pause here and really look at this now.

Because this is the part where it turns from me, getting hurt, to them, doing everything in their power to make me feel better – and me not forgiving. Holding a grudge.

Immediately they said "Absolutely we can restore it to the Internet. I owe you a huge apology; I did not see it that way and impulsively took the episode down without thinking about you or your feelings, or Ben's. I am so sorry. So, so sorry."

The episode was restored to the Internet, and apologies were accepted.

But these developments opened up a huge chasm of doubt inside me.

For the first time I wondered: What if what I create is worthless, and doesn't belong on the Internet?

(Never mind that I was hundreds of episodes in on my own show by then, with tens of thousands of downloads a month and a lovely community, that endures to this day, built around *We Turned Out Okay*. The chasm grew, regardless.)

That spring, all the key people in this organization invited Ben and I to a meeting in which they thanked us for all the work that we had done, and acknowledged that they were looking for something different than what we create.

They were incredibly sincere and wonderful. I felt seen, and heard, as did Ben. Still, my grudge persisted. That chasm grew.

Thus opened up a period of time, which ended just a few weeks ago, where I felt so hurt that I did not see beyond the grudge.

I didn't see all the reparations that my friend invited me into. Every time they would hug me, I took it as a sort of sad, pitying gesture (instead of the genuine affection that I now know it's been all this time.)

A few weeks ago I had a conversation with my coach. It was the first time I've examined the incident – the pulling down of that episode so long ago - and how my own ideas and opinions about it have held me back.

Despite all that this friend has done to show me “What you do is valuable, it's just not what we need. Also as a friend I love you,” I have hesitated to spend time with them or their family.

4 I have marinated in a special sauce I like to call “You Hurt Me Sooooo Much.”

My coach asked, “What if you could tell me the facts – ending with a period – instead of inserting a comma and continuing on with the story of how that made you feel?”

It was as if a boil was lanced.

I suddenly saw all the compassion that my friend has brought into our friendship over the years.

I saw myself, reticent to trust after being hurt.

I saw – for the very first time – my hurt feelings, my nursed grudge, the commas I've been inserting in the story I have been making up, as the problem.

And thankfully I saw a way forward. A way in which all my relationships are based in positive feelings for myself, as much as for others. I saw so much good that was hidden from me previously.

Hidden because of me. Not because of anyone else.

This opened space for fulfillment, and work that feels like play, in my life. And fun!

My coach gave me homework...

“First, less commas, more periods. Where else are you telling stories instead of considering facts?”

“Second, do an audit... ask yourself “How many other people am I holding back from talking to because of these stories I am telling myself?”

This homework has been life-changing.

It’s ongoing. Sometimes it’s not easy. There are some serious vulnerability hangovers, for sure.

But I’d much rather have the true understanding and the fulfilling life that comes with the homework.

If you dare...

This month we focus on a Life Audit for you.

Doing it, and living it, will help you fly to heights you had never thought you could. I know this from personal experience.

Do you dare?

Let’s dive in!

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November 2021 At-a-Glance & Calendar Expansion

Here’s how you Audit your life this month...

- Understanding: Auditing is Choosing
- Choosing your stimuli
- Choosing your relationships
- Choosing how you spend your time
- Choosing YOU.

Happy November – enjoy!

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	1. Let's play a game!	2. Auditing = choosing.	3.
7. Choosing your stimuli.	8.	9.	10.
14. Choosing your relationships.	15.	16.	17.
21. Choosing how you spend your time.	22.	23.	24.
28. Choosing YOU.	29.	30.	D1

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Ideas
4.	5.	6.	
11.	12.	13.	
18.	19.	20.	
25.	26.	27.	
D2	D3	D4	

Let's jump into November 2021!

November 1: Let's play a game!

Turn to page 19 for this month's edition of High/Low/Hero/Funny... This game can be played with your children and family; your closest friends; even just yourself. However you do it, be sure it works for you. This month is about choosing after all!

Week 1: Auditing is Choosing

November 2: The word "Auditing" is one of those words that used to scare me. It made me think of tax time, and how you hear about auditors looking into every part of someone's finances.

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It made me think of the song *Tax Man* by the Beatles.

However, I now understand that there are different kinds of auditing. That it's not necessarily a bad thing. In fact sometimes it's the most important thing that there is.

Spend this week developing your own understanding of the word auditing.

For today, write, doodle, or draw about your history with the word "auditing." You can do that right in this space:

November 3: You as auditor. What if you were the auditor, of your own life? What might that look like? Brainstorm in the space below...

November 4: Imagine for a moment that your life could look however you want it to look.

The resources and media you give your attention to. The people you spend time with. What you do with your time. How you feel inside.

Draw, doodle, or write about this “radical fake” life (as my friend, and coach, Dan Blank says)...

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Now, get ready to create it.

November 5: "Only once we learn to see the world through a more positive lens can we harness our motivation, emotion, and intelligence." – Happiness researcher Sean Achor

Does this idea resonate with you? Why, or why not? Share below...

November 6: Sean Achor’s idea, shared in yesterday’s *Playbook* entry, seemed impossible to implement when I first tried.

It was early in the pandemic and I felt so helpless, awash in fearful bad news. I didn’t know how to look away. I felt that if I did look away, I’d miss something important and those I love would suffer as a result.

Now I know the opposite is true. Now I know that continuing to look at negative, scary, and otherwise unhelpful news simply makes me feel paralyzed.

How about you? Where are you on the spectrum of “I must tune into the news cycle 24/7 “I attend only to positive stimuli”?

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Write, doodle, or draw about this below. (And remember, there is no judgment. Wherever you are on this spectrum, that’s simply information.)

This week you’ve accomplished important work in the precursors to choosing. You’ll spend the rest of this month playfully auditing...

Week 2: Choosing Your Stimuli

November 7: Can someone even get to the “only positive” end of that spectrum?

What are your thoughts?

November 8: How might you find positive stimuli, if you wanted to?

An important consideration. The answer I have found is to allow myself to be open to the idea that there even are such things.

The first of the positive stimulus that I found: *Some Good News* with Jon Krasinski, a YouTube Channel Krasinski started for just this reason. He was stuck at home, and wanted good news.

Today, Google “Jon Krasinski some good news” and check out episode one...

And/or tune into a positive resource in your own life. Everything from a biography of someone you admire, to a walk in the woods, counts.

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November 9: An important part of auditing... Paying attention to your body’s signals.

When you consume negative, or positive, resources or media (a.k.a. stimuli), what’s happening in your body?

Share here...

November 10: Don't force yourself.

If you, like me, feel nauseated, headachy, overstimulated, or otherwise are negatively impacted by what you're paying attention to, give yourself permission to get really curious about that.

What's causing it? Where is it coming from? Share here...

Give yourself permission to avoid what your body wants you to avoid.

The world will not end. Promise.

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November 11: "Before... the sirens bothered me. I would always think they meant trouble. Someone is hurt. Some crash has happened. Someone is being rushed to the hospital. The sirens were sad to hear. But now the sirens are comforting... relaxing. They reassure me. They are the sound of someone helping someone else." – Steve Chandler, from his book *Crazy Good*

Today, let's pause for a moment to think on those who put their lives on the line for our safety and well-being. Remember that "positive stimuli" doesn't mean only sunshine and rainbows and roses. It means people, making creative choices. Living into their values. Opening pathways to freedom for themselves and others. Influencing lives in a good way.

November 12 & 13: Continue choosing your stimuli. Pay attention to your body's signals about what resources and media you consume. Share your favorite positive resources here...

Week 3: Choosing Your Relationships

November 14: This week, take a good look at your relationships. The *Playbook* helps you do that by inviting you – as I did in the opening essay, when my coach invited me – to audit your relationships.

Deep breath. I'm here with you as you begin this sometimes-difficult exploration.

November 15: What stories are you telling yourself?

As humans, our social relationships are always set in a context. What's the context in which you place your closest relationships? Is it story, or is it fact?

Perhaps someone you're close to thinks of themselves as a victim, instead of as a survivor.

Perhaps a teacher or other authority figure has told you "There's nothing you can do about this." (Whatever "it" is.)

Where are the periods, versus the commas, in your life? (Reference the opening essay to help that question make more sense :) Over the next several days you get to audit your relationships, teasing out the commas from the periods and understanding what is story, and what are facts.

Choose one person you're close to, and write, doodle, or draw today's auditing here...

November 16: Who is someone else that you're close to? Audit this relationship today. What are their stories, and what are yours about them, your relationship with them, their beliefs about you? In short what are the facts versus what are the stories, and where are the commas versus the periods?

Write, doodle, or draw your auditing here...

November 17: Who is someone else that you're close to? Audit this relationship today. What are their stories, and what are yours about them, your relationship with them, their beliefs about you? In short what are the facts versus what are the stories, and where are the commas versus the periods?

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Write, doodle, or draw your auditing here...

November 18: Who is someone else that you're close to? Audit this relationship today. What are their stories, and what are yours about them, your relationship with them, their beliefs about you? In short what are the facts versus what are the stories, and where are the commas versus the periods?

Write, doodle, or draw your auditing here...

November 19 & 20: Review the relationships you spent this week auditing.

What new insight have you gained into these relationships?

What new insight have you gained into you, and how you view these relationships?

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How will you put these insights into action that will improve your life?

Week 4: Choosing How You Spend Your Time

November 21-27: There is what we say we want to do... but then there's what we actually do.

You'll spend this week auditing how you spend your time, and seeing how that makes you feel.

To get started, use Playsheet 2 on pages 20-21... Log the information in there and then come back here and share your thoughts and ideas on that information all week.

Monday...

Tuesday...

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Wednesday...

Thursday...

Friday...

Saturday...

Week 5: Choosing YOU

November 28: Look back on your entries this month, and reflect on your own learning.

How has your auditing enabled you to choose you? To pour from a full cup rather than an empty one... To put your own oxygen mask on first... To role-model the values you hold most dear with your loved ones?

Write, doodle, or draw about your reflections in this space...

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November 29: Coming to present with your learning. On this journey now, today, with the insights you have from your Life Audit, how are you feeling? Is there more you want to learn or reflect upon? Or is it time for action? Share your thoughts here...

November 30: How will you choose YOU, as you journey into the future?

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Get ready for December's *Playbook*! It's going to be a great month!

Playsheets

If you know me, you'll know I'm not a fan of worksheets. But I really wanted you to have a place to collect your thoughts in a worksheet kind of way, so I developed these Playsheets instead!

Playsheet 1: High/Low/Hero/Funny... In each issue of the *Playbook* we play this game, where everyone shares about the best thing that happened to them that day, the toughest thing about that day, and who was a kindness hero for them that day – and/or, what entertaining or funny thing happened?

We play this game each and every month so you can enjoy looking back on the highs, lows, heroes and funnies over your *Playbook* subscription!

Loved One	High	Low	Hero	Funny

Playsheet 2 – This Playsheet asks two key questions...**Monday:**

1. What are you actually doing with your time?	2. How does that make you feel?
12 AM-6 AM	
6 AM-12 PM	
12 PM-6 PM	
6 PM-12 AM	

Tuesday:

1. What are you actually doing with your time?	2. How does that make you feel?
12 AM-6 AM	
6 AM-12 PM	
12 PM-6 PM	
6 PM-12 AM	

Wednesday:

1. What are you actually doing with your time?	2. How does that make you feel?
12 AM-6 AM	
6 AM-12 PM	
12 PM-6 PM	
6 PM-12 AM	

Thursday:

1. What are you actually doing with your time?	2. How does that make you feel?
12 AM-6 AM	
6 AM-12 PM	
12 PM-6 PM	
6 PM-12 AM	

Friday:

1. What are you actually doing with your time?	2. How does that make you feel?
12 AM-6 AM	
6 AM-12 PM	
12 PM-6 PM	
6 PM-12 AM	

Saturday:

1. What are you actually doing with your time?	2. How does that make you feel?
12 AM-6 AM	
6 AM-12 PM	
12 PM-6 PM	
6 PM-12 AM	

Hello from The Dream HQ

The column where each month we visit a wonderful place for mindfulness and relaxation: Karen's Dream Headquarters.

We step into the glade of the Dream HQ, and we take in the view:

It's evening, and there is a party going on! It comes in one of three flavors...

1. A Real Barnburner – where everyone we love, including loved ones who've passed on, childhood pets, and folks we haven't been able to see in forever are all here. So are those dear to us, with whom we spend our days, out in the real world. It's a lively, exhilarating festival, and we've never seen so many people here before!

2. Intimate Besties – where those closest to us, past and/or present, are here. Quiet, relaxed, and peaceful <3

3. Dream HQ Glade Residents – Joy, Honey, the forest creatures, and us – a beautifully sized small group.

Whichever we choose, the Dream HQ is alive with sites, scents, and fun!

As we step into the Glade, we're just in front of the Big House. A path lit by candles invites us up to the open front doors, and when we walk in we see (and smell) so many favorite foods, all set up in the dining room and ready for us to enjoy.

There is a sign inviting us up to the Cookies & Books Room, where “freshly made favorites abound!”

Opening the door to this beloved Room, we see our favorite varieties of cookies... and favorite books abound here as well, both old and new. We spend just the

right amount of time here; depending on the size of the party we've chosen, this Room also has just the right amount of loved ones in it.

Before strolling back outside we notice that super special book we first saw several months ago, *The Book of You*. Opening it we once again get to relive all the fun and favorite parts from our life, beginning in infancy, continuing on up to now, and heading out into the future. What a special resource!

Heading out to the back of the Big House, we walk through the greenhouses, which currently boast beautiful ikebana flower arrangements for us to admire, and lessons in this wonderful Japanese art form.

Where to, we wonder, next? The maze is just ahead of us, we can see a treehouse in the South Woods that we have yet to visit, and Long Lake is off to our right.

We decide to take in all three, and spend just the right amount of time in each.

We are drawn to live music, walking back out towards the front of the Big House, and a delightful bonfire to warm us as we dance and sway to the music.

This is such a special party, partly because of how each of these spaces has been transformed for us this evening. And partly because of the loved ones who are here with us.

It feels so good to simply be together with those that we love, whether in a hugely extroverted way, or in a peaceful, introverted way.

We know will remember this night for a long, long time to come.

Best of all we know we can re-create it whenever we wish...

All we need to do is close our eyes and step into the Dream HQ.

What's coming up in the December *Playbook*?

For the final issue of the *We Turned Out Okay Playbook*, we concentrate on something that's all too scarce in many lives, and yet much needed by all...

Rest.

What constitutes rest for you? Are you getting enough? If not, how can you bring more of this crucial resource into your life?

Coming soon, right into your mailbox...

Have a great November and we will see you next month!



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