

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)



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Jen Riday

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You are listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast. I'm Dr. Jen Riday and we're talking today about balance. Stay tuned.

Hi, I'm Jen Riday. This podcast is for women who want to feel more vibrant, happy, aligned, and alive. You'll gain the emotional, physical, and spiritual tools you need to get your sparkle back and ensure that depression, anxiety, and struggle don't rule your life. Welcome to the Vibrant Happy Women Podcast.

Hello there ladies, welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women. We're talking about balance today. Some people say it doesn't exist, others say it's possible. What are your thoughts on finding balance in your life? Well, if you're a woman who feels out of whack, stressed out, overwhelmed sometimes, this episode is for you. Now, I've done a lot of episodes on time management but this one kind of takes the cake because Christy shares some ideas I have never considered before or heard about before, ideas like defining success as a parent, or a wife, or with your house.

The seasons of your life being actually matching up with the seasons, summer, fall, winter, spring in a year. And celebrating your successes and then who do you want to be, not just what do you want to do. So, you're going to love this one if you want to achieve greater balance in your life.

Before we dive in with Christy Wright I want to share our review of the week and it comes from Sarah Lynn H. She wrote, "This podcast is in my top three, sending gratitude for all your podcasts that you've shared throughout the year with me. There have been real life lessons that I've found helpful and positive on here. Jen continually comes across with a note of love and kindness as she teaches. I enjoy pondering on the lessons I find in her weekly episodes. Thank you for inspiring me." Sarah Lynn H, thank you for leaving your review. I love that. It makes me happy to know you're out there listening.

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

Everyone else, if you haven't left a review, we love them, we want them, you can leave yours at jenriday.com/review. We would appreciate it.

Well, today Christy Wright is my guest. She is the author the new book, *Take Back Your Time*. She is a number one national bestselling author, personal development expert and host of *The Christy Wright Show*. She's been featured on *Today* and *Fox News*, in *Entrepreneur* and *Woman's Day* Magazines. And since 2009, Christy has served at Ramsey Solutions where she teaches on personal development, business and faith. I am so glad to be talking about this. This is a really, really good book and I think you're going to love it. Let's dive in.

Jen: Alright, welcome to Vibrant Happy Women, Christy, I'm so glad you're here.

Christy: Yeah, thanks for having me.

Jen: So, go ahead and dive in and tell us your story of how you became kind of an expert on time and your new book, *Taking Back Your Time*, how did you get to that place? I assume you went through a low point before you managed this.

Christy: Well, everyone says an author writes the book they need. And that's definitely true for me. But having a passion for this subject, specifically balance and managing your time goes back so long ago. I have been a business coach for over a decade. And the number one question I have been asked in the last 10 years is not a business question. It's this question, how do you balance it all? How do you balance everything?

And so, it piqued my interest a long time ago and I began to read and research, and speak on this subject, and talk to audiences, and coach

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

people and so on. But it took on a whole new meaning when I had three kids in five years, and of course a busy career. And so, it was more out of necessity as we see our world is just speeding up. We've got technology connecting us. We got the iPhone in 2007. We've got even working from home changing so much in the last 18 months.

And so, I think people just feel strapped, and strained, and stressed more than ever before. And I want to come into this space and not just show people how to manage their calendar. That is surface level to me. I want to get to the issue behind the issue. I want to talk about why we feel so out of balance in the first place and what the true version of balance we're looking for is. Because I think when we say we want balance we actually are asking for something else.

And so, I really dig into the root issues behind this. And then, oh, by the way, show you how to manage the calendar of course. But I want to get to the deeper layers so that we can solve it at the root level.

Jen: So that's really interesting. I've heard every theory about balance like you can do it. You can have it all. As some people say, balance doesn't even exist. It's not a real concept. All it is, is walking back and forth on a seesaw. So, what's your definition of balance?

Christy: I know. Well, we have all the analogies, don't we? Juggling balls, spinning plates, walking the tightrope, some balls are rubber, some balls are glass. Which balls can you let drop on a Tuesday? We've got it all.

Jen: Yes, very good.

Christy: And then we've got other alternatives to balance, it's not work life balance. It's work life harmony. It's not work life balance, it's work life integration. These are beautiful, again, this did not help me manage my Tuesday. So, what I've started to really dig into is okay, what are we really

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

asking for? Because despite everyone's feelings around this word and we've got all the feelings, a lot of eye rolls, balance is BS. We've got all the problems with the word. Despite that, we can't stop talking about it. We can't stop asking about it.

And so clearly there's something in us that is craving something more than what we have right now. And we're calling that balance. Now, we think the solution to our problem with balance is that we need to do more. I need to wake-up earlier. I need to stay up later. I need to pour more coffee, have a better morning routine and to be more organized, I need to multitask, be more efficient, more productive, work smarter, not harder, smarter and harder, all the things. And all we end up is exhausted, not more balanced.

And so, I think that when we think the path to balance is productivity, we're missing it. What I think balance looks like is peace, being confident in your choices, being proud of how you spend your time for once. Actually, enjoying your life. I think that's what we're really after when we say we want balance. I think we want to feel peace. I think we want to be confident when we say yes to this thing or no to that thing. I think we want to be proud of how we're spending our time instead of weighed down by guilt. I think we want to enjoy our life.

That's what I think we're really after when we say we want balance. And the path to that is not productivity. It's not doing more, because balance has become this thing that is elusive and evasive. We don't know what balance is. We're just sure we don't have it. And so, it becomes this shadow that haunts us, no matter what we're doing we feel like we're doing the wrong thing. And so, I set out in this book to reclaim the word. I intentionally put it on the cover, the guilt free guide to life balance. I want to reclaim it, redefine it and here's how I define it in the book.

A lot of people get this idea of balance as a 50/50 split between work and home which is not realistic, or even desirable. Or then we think, well,

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

balance comes from doing everything an equal amount of time. I'm going to have my workout time, my client time, time with my kids, time with my spouse, time cleaning the house, time doing work, time doing goals, time alone. That's not realistic at all. And when we don't do that because we can't and we won't, we beat ourselves up. We tell ourselves that we're failing and we're weighed down by guilt.

So, here's the definition of balance that I base the whole book on. Life balance is not doing everything for an equal amount of time. It's about doing the right things at the right time. And you get to decide what's right for you. When you do the right things at the right time you actually feel that sense of balance that you've been looking for all along. And here's what's so powerful about this. When you get in the habit of asking yourself what's right, right now? You not only give yourself permission to focus on the right things at the right time, whatever that might be.

You give yourself permission to focus on them, be proud of them, be present with them, make progress with them. But here's what's really cool. You finally can shake the guilt for all the things you're not doing that are not right, right now. Doesn't mean they'll never be right. They're just not right, right now. So, whether you are taking care of a parent who's sick, or you're healing from surgery, or you're hands-on with one of your kids because they really need you right now, or you're starting a business, or you're in law school.

Or you're in a season of rest and take slowing down, and going on vacation, and taking some time off. You get to decide what this season looks like, what's right, right now. When you do the right things at the right time you actually feel that sense of balance you've been looking for.

Jen: I love that. What's right, right now. So, I've noticed a lot of women try to meet social expectations or what their moms think they should be doing, or their husbands. So how do we know what's right, right now?

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

Christy: Well, one sentence that I say in the book over, and over, and over again because I really want some people to get it, this is your life, no one else's. This is your life, no one has a right to tell you what should be important to you, what matters to you, what's right for you right now. Now, of course, the exception to this is those in your household, you and your spouse should have a conversation about what you want this season to look like, what he wants this season to look like. And both of you put your priorities on paper and the calendar.

And I talk about how to use some of these questions of this framework that I lay out in the book to spark conversations with you and your spouse if you're married, your older kids. I mean even teenagers, you can talk about what do we want our summer to look like, where you guys come together as a family. But outside of your household, no one gets a right to tell you what should be important to you. They have a life. They have a calendar. They have time, they can do whatever they want with it. But this is your life. And so, you have the responsibility to spend it on what's right for you.

A little bossy statement I say about this, and I've tried to find a nicer way to say it but I really can't. Here's the truth. If someone has a problem, if someone does not like how you spend your time, that's their problem, not yours. They have a life. This one's yours. And I want to remind you. I don't even need to give you permission, you already have it. I want to remind you that it's your life and empower you to take hold of that and do what's right for you.

That's what's going to lead to that sense of peace, and confidence, and enjoyment that you're seeking. Not doing what everyone else wants you to do, doing what's right for you.

Jen: That's great. So, you say the path to balance is not equal amounts of time at this or that. What is the path to balance in your opinion?

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

Christy: So, I lay it out in five tactical steps. I love to make things practical especially since this is so elusive. It becomes this, if we never define success in this then we can never achieve it. So, I want to help people figure out what matters and then align their time with this. So, I lay it out in five steps that you can follow in any new season. And I do recommend you look at this through the lens of your season because what's right today may be different than what was right six months ago or six years ago, or in a year from now.

So here is the overview and then we can dive into whatever you want to. Step one, decide what matters. If you're going to do the right things at the right time, you need to know what the right things are. So, I walk you through how to decide what's right for you right now.

Step two, stop doing what doesn't matter. If we would cut out all the things that are not important to us, all the things we lose time to, waste time on, things that are not important to us at all that don't matter, we'd free up a lot of time for things that do.

Step three, create a calendar that reflects what matters. As tactical as this is the only things we put on our calendar are dentist appointment and soccer practices. And then we wonder why all these things we care about don't happen. Well, they don't happen because you didn't put them on the system you've chosen to live your life by. So, whether it's an early bedtime, or a date night, or reading a good book, it needs to go on the calendar if it's going to happen. It's not legalistic. This is a tool to help you do what you say you want to do.

So, this is how you execute on those things that matter, they go on a calendar so that they happen.

Step four, protect what matters. That's all about setting boundaries and saying no because even after you create your version of balance, which is

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

what I help you do in this book, you've got to be willing to protect it from pushy people and all the opportunities and distractions that creep up, or your own temptations to get off course. So, protect what matters, so setting boundaries and saying no.

And then step five, I think is my favorite and that is be present for what matters. Because even if you create the most perfect schedule in the world, if you're not present for it you miss it. And that's where a lot of our guilt comes from. We go to work and we think about our kids and feel like a bad mom or dad. We go home with our kids and we think about work and the deadlines we're behind on. We're always focused on where we're not. If you live your whole life this way, of course you feel guilty because you're always focused on where you're not.

Flip your focus, be present for those things that matter where you can be where your feet are. And then what's amazing is research shows when you're present in the moment you're not only feeling more balanced, you're actually happier because you're finally getting to experience your life, experience a moment while you're actually in it. And that is really, really powerful in our world of distractions. So, decide what matters, stop doing what doesn't matter, create a calendar that reflects what matters, protect what matters and be present for what matters.

When you do this in any new season you will always be doing the right things at the right time, which will lead to that balance, and confidence, and peace we talked about.

Jen: I love that. So, I've noticed during the pandemic that articles and research shows that a lot of women are leaving the workplace because they disproportionately were doing more at home which has been true for decades. It's getting a little better but not better enough for many women. So, let's say some of those women have decided family's first. And they still

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

want to do other fulfilling things, what does that look like to protect the boundaries exactly, how would they do that?

Okay, family's first but they want other things. And their husband wants something and their kids want something. What do the boundaries look like in your opinion for that?

Christy: Yes. So, a huge piece of this and I think this is where we get ourselves in trouble, because we don't do this. A huge piece of this is you need to define success. And let me unpack that really quickly. Define success in your parenting What does that look like? Let's say I want to be home with my kids and engaged from 5:30 to 7:30 every night, I want to be there for dinner. That's 10 hours a week. And I want to have some good quality family time on a Saturday afternoon from 12:00 to 5:00. So, then you define success. This is what success looks like.

If I do this, I'm winning. If I do this I'm successful. If I do this I'm happy with myself as a mom or dad. Define success in your small business, or side business, or a work from home job, or your hobbies, or your outlets, define success. Okay, I want to work on my side business 10 hours a week. I want to exercise. The problem is we never define success in our parenting. We never define success in our business. We never define success in these major areas where the work is never done. Even in your household, what does success look like in terms of how clean your house is?

I literally have boiled this down to three rooms. If my kitchen, living room and bedroom are clean where I spend the most of my time, that is success. I'm not going to walk into the playroom and beat myself up because I'm not going to fight for that room. I'm going to let that room go. I'm going to fight for these rooms. So, if you never define success, that's the reason you never achieve it. You can spend 50 hours a week with your kids and you feel like it's not enough. But man, I missed dinner Thursday night, but I missed dinner. You spent 50 hours with them this week.

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

We always focus on what we didn't do, what we didn't get to, where we perceive we're falling short because the work is never done with kids. It's never done in business. It's never done in our household. If we don't define success, it's the reason that that finish line always moves and we always perceive that we're failing. If you would simply define success, what is an amount of hours or the times of day, or the types of activities that make you feel like I am successful in my parenting, I can do this and I can feel good about it.

What that does is when you have achieved that it gives you permission to go into your home office, or your craft room, or your whatever and go, "Okay now I have permission to focus on this thing." I have done what I said I want to do. I know this is a silly example but last year in the pandemic, speaking of the pandemic. I was out of town three of the four weekends in August and I was feeling really guilty for leaving my kids. I was like, "Man." I was like, "Gosh, I just feel really bad, I'm leaving my kids these three weekends", whatever.

And my husband, my husband's very practical, he's very logical and he can always bring me back down to Earth. And he said, "Christy, you have been locked up with our children for six months. Six months of uninterrupted family time. I think it's okay that you're gone for three weekends." You see, that's what we do. We only focus on what we perceive we're doing wrong, what we perceive we're falling short, where we didn't get to what we said no to, the two tasks out of the 50 we did not check off. And we're not appreciating, or being proud of, or even enjoying the things we're doing right.

And so, I would just encourage people to when you've got a lot of things going on, you want to be home, family first, that's awesome. Still define what success looks like because if your version of success is that you never leave your children's side then you will never be able to have any interest outside of them. You'll never be able to start a business or do

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

anything. So, you need to define success. If success is six days a week, one day a week, mom's going to go a coffee shop and work all day, or success is x, y, z.

You just define it and then you know what you're working toward, you know when you can achieve it and you can shake the guilt when you move on to something different.

Jen: I love that. Too often we let a magazine or a sitcom define our success. And it's impossible, right?

Christy: Well, and here's what's interesting and I'm guilty of this too, Jen. Here's one of the things I see. I've noticed, let's say we're scrolling through Instagram or seeing headlines or whatever in your example, even the moms at the PTA. We judge other women by what they're doing right. And we judge ourselves by what we're doing wrong. So, we scroll through Instagram and we go, "Oh my gosh, her kids are so well behaved, mine are smearing peanut butter on the walls."

"Oh my gosh, she looks so put together. I've got mascara under my eyes and I'm wearing holey sweaty pajama pants." "Oh, she's rocking it in business. I forgot to get my kids lunch today." In place of all the things you think you're falling short on, there's a lot of things you're doing right.

So, I just encourage people to look at, to acknowledge, to be proud of the things you're doing right as well. Because the same credit that we give others, we have an opportunity to give ourselves that credit, not from a place of arrogance, or entitlement. But just going, "Hey, yeah, maybe we fell short here or there but there's all these things we said yes to that we did do right." And so, I'll tell you a really tactical thing I do and this is super powerful. It's a great takeaway for your listeners today.

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

So, in the morning I have a journaling exercise where I literally spend three minutes, this does not take long at all, I'm not a big journaler but I will write down two to three lines of just checking with myself how I'm feeling as I plan my day. And before I write my to do list for the day of what I want to get done. I have to write down what I'm proud of from yesterday. And it could be anything from I took my kids to the playground, or I cooked dinner, or I had coffee with a friend, or I got caught up with email, or I slept in and rested, or I did a little yoga.

It could be anything but here's what's so powerful about this. When I take a moment, just a moment to reflect on what I'm proud of from yesterday, it helps me see what a good job I'm doing. It helps me appreciate the things I'm doing right, before I'll pile on all the pressure of the day ahead. Because I think we live in a perpetual state of looking at what is yet to be done. Never pausing and reflecting on what we're proud of that we've already done. Because let's say that I have a to do list for today.

Let's just say for example, I make a to do list of five things I want to get done today and I don't get them done. I don't get any of them done, for one reason or another I don't. I didn't check off any of those boxes, I would naturally beat myself up for that. You didn't get through your to do list. You're just dah, dah, dah, you don't have enough time, you're just whatever, you're not proactive enough. So, the next morning I would sit down and journal and write down what I'm proud of from yesterday.

And I would have all these things that I did. I did this. I did this. Were they the things on my to do list? No, but in place of all those things I perceived I didn't get to, there's a long list of things I did do right. And it helps me acknowledge those, and appreciate those, and be proud of those before I pile on the pressure of the day. I just want to help women and men appreciate what they're doing right so that they can actually enjoy their life.

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

I don't want, one of the things that kills me, that this book I think is shining light into this space is men and women are walking around all day every day feeling like they're failing and they're not. They're not failing. I want to break that lie that they're living under. And I want to show them, yes, tactical things to manage their calendar. But I want to show them what a good job they're already doing. And then build from that foundation. I just, I want to help people get to the end of their life and look back and go, "You were doing a great job and you knew it at the time, not just in hindsight."

Jen: Yeah, that's great. Celebrating, I think it also trains our brain to recognize this was important. Look how good we feel after we did it. And then it's easier to do it again the next time.

Christy: That's exactly right.

Jen: Yeah. So, you mentioned creating a success standard for cleaning. So, kitchen, family room, bedroom, I think you said. So that allowed you to cut out doing the playroom for example. What else have you been able to cut out using this method?

Christy: Okay, so this is basic prioritization and I know it sounds so tactical. But we in general suck at it which is we treat everything as if it's pretty equal and it's not. And so, the house is a great analogy for this. I write about it in the book. But I've realized that unless I send my children away to boarding school and have a cleaning crew come in, and work around the clock, I cannot have my whole house clean at the same time. It's not that my house is that big, it's not. It's just my kids are that fast at messing up.

So, I'm like, "Okay, I don't want to spend my life cleaning. I want to actually have time with my kids in the evenings and on the weekends." So, I just choose which rooms I fight for and which rooms I let go, which rooms make the cut, and which room do not. So, the rooms that make the cut, the kitchen, the living room, and the bedroom make the cut. I spend the most of

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

my time in those rooms and I want them to be clean. So, I fight hard for them and they are. That's very doable.

The other rooms, like the kids' rooms, the playroom and the deck all of which are places that have toys, I choose to let those go. I choose that's a key word here, choose to let those go. So, when I walk into the playroom and it looks like a tornado has come through, I don't beat myself up for that. You go, "You're failing, you're failing, you need to clean this up." No, no, no, I look at that and I think I choose that mess.

I've chosen to let this room go because that mess represents time better spent somewhere else. That means I get time with my kids in the evening and that to me is more important than a perfectly clean house and stressing cleaning up after them 24/7. I want to be a present mom that's engaged with them. But you can do this with your schedule. So, for example, this summer, and that's why I always talk about this through the lens of seasons. My life kind of falls in three seasons, spring, summer and fall with my kids' school calendar and my work.

So, the summer is naturally a lighter season at work for me. Well, because it's lighter more things make the cut. I just have more capacity because there's not any one big consuming thing in the summer. So, during the summer I'm working out, I'm seeing my friends, my house is pretty clean, lots of quality time with my kids, get my work done, maybe five or six things make the cut as far as the focus in the week. Well, this fall, this fall is different. This fall is not like that at all. This fall is exhausting. I am in a season where I've got three very consuming things.

Number one, launching a book, it's very consuming with all the media, and interviews, and meetings, and shoots, and events and all the things, which is awesome. I choose that, that's number one. Number two, of course my family, my kids always make the cut, in any season they make the cut. And

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

number three, I'm in seminary right now which is a lot of work, a lot of reading, taking this class.

Okay, so what are the things that don't make the cut in this fall season? Well, I'm not working out hardly ever. My house is not that clean. And I haven't seen my friends. Now, if I only focus on what falls below the line then I feel like a failure. You're a bad friend. You're lazy, you're not working out. Your house is a mess, you're a mess. But instead, when you begin to ask yourself what's right, right now and focus on that and be proud of it, it keeps your mind focused on the things that are important to you and it helps you shake the guilt for the things that this is not the season for.

So, when I walk through my living room, Jen, and I step over toys, I don't tell myself, "Oh, you're failing." I tell myself, "Girl, that's not right, right now. This is not the season for a perfectly clean house. That's not a priority. You're reading 300 pages a week on the Book of Revelation. You're doing great." So, it helps you reset on what you're saying yes to and being proud of what you're saying yes to and enjoying what you're saying yes to instead of always perpetually focusing on what you've had to say no to, or what has fallen below the line.

So, there's an element of this of choosing, what makes the cut and what doesn't in your house, in your calendar, in anything. But then even after you choose it, acknowledge it, be proud of it, remind yourself of it, refocus on it. I have to do this daily. This is not like I have arrived and I never struggle with that again. I literally still have to remind myself throughout a day, "Hey, this is not the season for that. This is not the season for that." That's okay.

And an important point here is just because something is not right, right now, doesn't mean it'll never be right. It's just not right, right now. Listen, Jen, I want to get a dog. I want to go to Europe. I want to run a marathon. That's not right, right now, I'll do that someday. If I tried to go to Europe, or

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

run a marathon, or get a dog, it would stress me out to the max. A good thing at the wrong time is a bad thing. It's going to stress you out. That's why I love this definition of balance. The right things at the right time. When you do that you will constantly be creating your version of balance in any new season.

Jen: That's so great. I love how you do seasons. I mean most of us have heard of the season of life. And we think about huge age periods like young woman, middle aged woman, old woman. But actually, choose seasons within a regular year, that's fun, you can have a different life every season of the year. I love that.

Christy: It's so true. And one of the things I talk about in the book when I talk about the side what matters, that can be hard to determine, especially for busy women that have never even stopped to consider themselves for half a minute. But one of the questions I give in this chapter is, if you have trouble answering that question, don't ask yourself what do you need to do, ask yourself who do I want to be? And that can be really eye-opening. Who do I want to be in this season> Summer, Christy.

Summer Christy is fun. She's hanging out. She's at the lake. She's having a beer. She's going waterskiing. Summer Christy is awesome. This fall, this is hardworking Christy, this is we're going to get some stuff done, get this book out there, very focused. It's okay, of course our essence doesn't change. We are who we are. But you have permission to decide what you want this season to look like, which aspect of yourself you want to highlight, which parts of your life you want to focus on and make progress in.

You have permission to change your mind, and your plans, and your priorities, you should. I tell people all the time, when things change, things need to change. And maybe it's your season between summer and fall, fall to spring, whatever. Maybe something happened, maybe you lost a job, maybe your kids went back to school, maybe you're starting a business.

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

Maybe you have a new goal, a new priority, one of your kids needs you, you're taking care of an ailing parent. When things change, things need to change.

Don't keep holding your feet to the fire, or what you expected of yourself before that thing happened. So, things can change in a season. Things can change when huge aspects of your life change. But we go back to step one, we say, "Okay, now that my kids are in school. Now that I'm taking care of a parent. Now that I'm starting a business", whatever these things are, now with that in mind decide what matters. Alright, well, I'm going to spend all of my evenings at my mom's house, taking her dinner. So, what must be true?

Well, now I'm not going to cook for my family, they're going to get takeout. I'm going to get help. You begin to make better decisions when you ask yourself what's right, right now in relation to your season. And that could be a calendar season or a season in terms of what's going on in your world. And I think that's really important for us to do the right things.

Jen: What's right, right now. I love that. That is a great definition for balance, very, very good. Well, I want to thank you for being on the show. Everyone, Christy Wright, author of Take Back Your Time. Thank you so much for being here.

Christy: Thanks, Jen, thanks for having me.

Okay my friends, everything that you heard in this episode can be useful. But what is the one or maybe two things that you are going to implement in your life? I personally love this idea of defining success and these seasons. I can be a different Jen this fall than I was this summer. I love that idea. So many more seasons in our lives for every year instead of three sections of

[Vibrant Happy Women](#) with Jen Riday

292: The Real Path to Balance (with Christy Wright)

life. So, what are you going to take away? What are you going to implement? I would love to hear about it.

You can email me your thoughts, your wins, your successes, I'll celebrate with you by emailing us at support@jenriday.com. I love you all. You're doing amazingly. Celebrate your wins like Christy said, celebrate what you accomplish. Make sure you have that measure for your success as a mom, as an employee, as a woman, as a friend, with your exercise, with your finances. You can set up any measure of success and be celebrating all day long. You deserve that.

I love you. I will see you next time. Until then make it a vibrant and happy week. Take care.

If you enjoy this podcast, you have to check out the Vibrant Happy Women Club. It's my monthly group coaching program where we take all this material to the next level and to get you the results that will blow your mind. Join me in the Vibrant Happy Women Club at jenriday.com/join.