

# 76 Podcast Conversation with Mel Miles

Mon, 4/11 3:01PM 24:03

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

life, vacation, traveled, people, emotions, rebel leader, rebel, work, anxiety, desires, book, feel, principles, world, beliefs, left, location, unlearning, feeling, long

## SPEAKERS

Murielle Machiels

---



Murielle Machiels

Hi. I'm Murielle co mom, an educator, I used to work really hard and sacrifice important things to me until I lost my motivation. Fast forward past many failed attempts and lessons learned. And I found a way to reach great results while working less. Today, I'm obsessed with helping other leaders build meaningful lives. So each week, I'll be sharing inspiration to change your life and organization. This is rebel leader with a heart Hello, Melody, welcome into rebel leader with a heart. It's really nice to have you here.



Good morning. Great to be here.



Murielle Machiels

Yeah. So maybe you can tell us a little bit who you are?



Absolutely. So my name is Mel miles. And I am a public health expert. I'm an entrepreneur, I'm the founder of the wellness company. So location that's mission is to help men and women design a life they don't need a vacation from. But I spent my 20s working for Bill and Melinda Gates at the Gates Foundation, and so have traveled all over Africa. And then have traveled all over the world, interviewing women from developing countries to develop countries and what it means to be happy.



Murielle Machiels

Great, great. And did you have the chance to meet Bill and Melinda Gates?



I did. So I was a program officer and I managed our investment portfolio for about six and a half years. Yeah, so I had the privilege of working with them, supporting their travels supporting their voice in the world. Great,



Murielle Machiels

great. But then I read that at some point in your life, it got the anxiety got so bad that it even led to you being hospitalized. Could you Would you be okay to share a little bit more about that how it came to even being hospitalized?



Absolutely. And this is a story I hope people can resonate with maybe you're not hospitalized with anxiety, but I think we all have experienced anxiety and also this feeling of overwhelm exhaustion stress from our work. And I find that you know, the the more success we achieve sometimes in our careers, the busier calendars become and the harder it actually is to claim time for ourselves. So I had an influential job that I loved. It truly was aligned with my skill set. I was traveling the world meeting heads of state. I was I had traveled to 25 African countries, I was representing some of the world's richest people and felt a deep responsibility but also a deep passion for my work. And I believe passion is the gateway to an a signal that we're doing the right work, but I think anything, anything that it goes to the extreme can be unhealthy and dangerous. So for me, I lost myself in my job, my identity became so connected with my job. I traveled so much. And I had been experiencing anxiety for years while working and it was kind of just that thing on the backburner that.



Murielle Machiels

And when you say I was experiencing anxiety for years how, how were you experiencing it? How did it manifest



digestive issues, chronic headaches, turning to coffee and wine and sugar to numb my emotions, not having deeply connected relationships. My kind of self worth being very connected to my work. So if my work was going bad, I felt that if my work was going good, I felt good. I didn't have as many like hobbies or other outlets to express myself. I didn't care for my body, right? So like there was no facials, there was no like weekend retreats away. I didn't have a meditation practice. I didn't know how to I so desperately wanted to be healthy, but I didn't have the tools to actually find that. So I numbed and I used work as my escape route because everyone celebrated me as being successful. And so it was fueled by that external validation, but still had an anxiety and so I think success can be sometimes the disguise right? It can be a way that we can hide behind the feelings we don't know how to feel, or certain things in our

life. We don't know how to move through so it was an Intel. I ended up having a panic attack. I literally left a meeting room like I was in like fifth floor board room right below Bill Gates office ended up literally like head spinning palms sweating body shaking, didn't even know what a panic attack was. ended up running to the bathroom collapsing on the floor started vomiting, ended up in the hospital. And I remember telling the doctor, I had just come back from a trip to Zambia, I was like, I have the world's next emerging infectious disease. And he had to look me in the eye and be like, This is caused by your emotions. He's like, either you step back from work and take care of yourself, or you're going to be in the emergency room again.



Murielle Machiels

Wow. Yeah. So you really collapsed and ended up in a hospital? For how long?



No, it was just a day or two, you know, like, it was just overnight. But it was the beginning of my reckoning with work had become too much life and become too much I needed to reclaim my well being.



Murielle Machiels

Yeah. And probably you felt like all these emotions, they're standing in the way I have to keep functioning, I have to keep delivering and working. So I just ignore them and put them aside. That's what you were doing?



Absolutely. I think the self talk of I don't have time for this. You know, I have to take care of everyone else's needs before my own, I have to take care of my work tasks before anything else. It was just life kept going. Life kept happening. And I didn't know how to stop it. I didn't know how to put the brakes on. And question whether this was even the life I wanted to live, whether it was the lifestyle, I wanted to live like that pause and spaciousness to even be an observer of my life. I felt like I was gonna lose everything. If I even did that. I mean, I remember the hospital telling the doctor I couldn't, I couldn't go tell my boss that I landed in the emergency room because of emotions. Right? I was like, You need to give me another diagnosis. Yeah. Oh.



Murielle Machiels

And so what's happened there? Was that sufficient for you to change things? Because like you say, you first thought no, this is not happening to me. I'm not gonna tell my boss this has happened. So what happened that day, and maybe the week after



I, it took many months, I do believe sometimes we have to reach rock bottom in order to change. And that was my rock bottom, it came on the heels of the death of my mother, the recent end of my marriage. All I had going was my career at that point. But I ended up deciding to leave my job at the Gates Foundation. And I kind of went extreme because I had been ignoring myself for so long. So I, I got rid of all my belongings, I left my house, I quit my job right after I had essentially been offered a promotion, and decided that I would travel the world and I was a scientist. I'm a scientist by training a public health expert. And I decided to apply my scientific training to wellbeing and happiness to how can we optimize from our own happiness, right, I had checked all the boxes and didn't feel good on the inside. And so I wrote a list of all the things I thought might make me happy. And I've 18 months, essentially doing those things on my list, I've given myself permission to be selfish to choose my own joy. And I interviewed women from around the world, they would need to design life they don't need a vacation from I think there's so many barriers in terms of patriarchy, and societal norms, and so many burdens, both emotional and physical place on women. And I just wondered if it was possible to live another way.



Murielle Machiels

So that's when you came back from there, you continued working at first. And then other things happens like your, your mother, your marriage. And at a certain point, a couple of months later, you you really changed everything.



And now I guide people, I don't think you'd have to make a drastic change in your life necessarily. It depends where you are, and what moment you are. Some people just feel math, right. And some people are like, this is not right. But I am so convinced that we can always change our life. Right, we can always begin again, no matter how high we've climbed, no matter how far we've we've gone, we always can make a different choice. And we can always undo the decisions we made or the version of the previous version of ourselves. And I think it's really important. And such a gift that we can do this in life.



Murielle Machiels

Yeah. And what do you do today? How long? How long ago was that? That this episode happened? The hospitalization?



The hospitalization happened four years ago.



Murielle Machiels

Yeah. And I always your life today then.



And I'm proud to say that on the other side, I spent that sabbatical really questioning our relationship to work because for me work was so much my identity and I'm an American. And so I've studied internalized capitalism, which is this concept that we believe our self worth or happiness. And our security comes from our work. And I think it's very American thing, but the money we make exactly. And I decided to really redesign my relationship with work in a way that again, optimized for my own freedom, my own joy and my own happiness. And so now I work quite a bit less. I'm involved in my own schedule. I really have studied during my pass, I studied what it was like to like, be on vacation because I kind of took the sabbatical, right? What did I do? What did I enjoy, and I learned, even as other women this and sometimes we think it's very extravagant things but but I found when I was hearing and what was true for me is like, the long morning routine and cup of coffee, that afternoon nap, the trip to the spa, right? Every few weeks, like leisurely cooking dinner. And so I realized that these things that we longed for on vacation we can actually do in our everyday life. And it really just comes to deploying design principles into our lifestyle. And so now I genuinely do say that I've designed a life I don't need a vacation from because I've gotten clear on who I am on vacation like what am I give myself permission to do on vacation that I don't usually do? And how do I bring that version of myself into my everyday life. So I, every single day I write down, like my rest and play, as well as my three work priorities. So I'm very strategic about not only planning the most important worst work tasks, but also planning what I'm going to do for rest and play because I believe that's essential to my well being. And I also like write down how I'm feeling well, physically and emotionally every single morning, and I give this test very simple. But based on that I really do plan my day because I believe you should manage your energy, not your time. Right? Like, I think anxiety and stress comes from when we are when we are legitimately feeling sad or disappointed. And we feel like we have to muscle through because we said yes to someone at work or Yes to a friend. When we're living not in alignment with our emotional energy. We're gonna feel pain and stress. But we're living in alignment, when it's like, okay, I'm feeling sad for a good reason. Today, I'm gonna actually cancel on my meetings or not follow through on a commitment or give myself a little bit more space, then all of a sudden, you're, you know, you're allowing yourself to energetically be in that space of sadness, you need to be in and it moves through, it passes faster than like, oh my gosh, I'm still gonna like muscle through this day. And then this, like Stan is really just get stuck in your body and you never have time to process it. So, so many people manage their time, but I say managing your energy. And being in flow with your emotions is the most helpful thing to being productive. And, you know, yeah, living a life that feels solid, grounded, and full of peace and joy, because that is like we it's our birthright, we all deserve peace and joy.



**Murielle Machiels**

Yeah, yeah, that's also one of the principles I teach. And the chapter of the module of one of the modules of my course is manage your energy and fears, not your time. Because I also realized as a CEO, as an entrepreneur, that managing my energy was my first priority. Because with good energy, you have good thoughts. And then it can lead to better actions and better results. And with bad energy, you have bad thoughts, and that leads to bad actions and not the results you want. So yeah, completely agree. Completely agree. So you decided them, I'm

gonna write a book. Did you decide to write the book during that sabbatical year? Or because you've already helped other people with those concepts? And then you wanted to write about it or what made you decide to write this book?



So I've had a dream of writing a book since I was a little girl it was one of those big scary dreams I think sometimes we all have that right like that crazy project that you don't have training in or connection connections in but it's it just sounds fun to do. And I actually wrote this, this book, so location, design a life you don't need a vacation from during COVID. So I had been traveling, obviously COVID hit and it impacted our ability to travel to move around the whole world shifted. And I was really curious if you could bring the mindset of vacations or just taking many vacations into your daily life. And so the books location was written during COVID Right an era where we were all changing and is a project and offering I'm really excited about it teaches people how just you know Research says we're our best stuff on vacation, we're the most open to new ideas, we're the most open to new people, we're the most curious. And we're most connected to our happy self. And so the books, vocation is all about teaching people how to connect with that version of themselves to study what it really is, and what feelings they love on vacation, and then how to apply the principles of life design to designing your daily work life around connecting with and embodying that best self, because I believe that working hard and being miserable, so you can have a two week vacation each year isn't worth it, there's another way to live. And if you don't like that boss, or you feel like your work is stressful, like maybe there, there's just inner work that needs to be done to come into alignment with what it is you truly want. And desire. And oftentimes, stress anxiety, is because we're denying needs, wants or desires. And once we can surface them and make some sometimes big life choices to honor our needs, wants and desires. We can live a life we don't need a vacation from



**Murielle Machiels**

Yeah, yeah, that's how I designed my life. When I quit my job, I really thought about what's the life I wouldn't want to retire from. So I wasn't thinking about vacation, but more about the one I wouldn't want to retire from that. That really gives me energy. So, but it's nice that you brought the idea of a vacation into your work. So you have a couple of principles. So how many principles do you have? And what are those principles?



So I do have a seven step framework, which I call fun work in the book. And I also teach it in my free masterclass that people can access that take us location.com. But maybe I'll just share a few of them on this podcast. One is. One is connecting to the your emotions. So the emotion under the emotion, I believe that when we can name how we're feeling and honor that feeling. And that we again move through it quicker. The other is accessing your intuition. I always say that the longest journey is the 18 inches from my head and my heart. Because I find so many of us lead with our mind. And when we learn to touch, trust the body and the signals in the body and like what you know, is this, the sensations in our body hadn't weren't what would they be saying to us and begin a practice of learning to trust our intuition and make decisions based on our intuition. Oftentimes, that's where our needs, wants desires live. And women in particular have been so numb, that often they don't trust their desires as good or healthy. So that's

another one and then maybe a third one I'll share is about just unlearning limiting beliefs. I believe the workers location is more about unlearning than it is learning. I think we're a society that has takes in information all the time. And we don't actually need information, it's about coming back to like, It's about remembering who we truly are. And it's a work of remembrance. And so there's a lot of limiting beliefs about, oh my gosh, I don't have enough money. I hear that all the time to live a life like I don't have a vacation from I can't quit my job. I can't leave this partnership. What about my kids? You know, it's selfish. For me. It's too big of a risk. What if I fail? I don't know how to do this. Like, these are all beliefs we have that really just limit the possibility in our life. And I believe we have to connect to a future version of ourselves way before we ever become that version of ourselves. And so being able to access what it what it would feel like to like wake up in your dream life. And where would you have your coffee? And where would you sit? And like what colors and fabrics would you be wearing? And beginning to really connect not just with like what you want, but what it would be like to embody and live that dream day. It's really important to unlearn these limiting beliefs that are truly just beliefs, right? Like, you can change it. Is this belief true? Might there be another belief? What would your life be like if you believed another belief? Yeah, how do you know? So those are three of the sulfation framework principles. But again, there's seven of them and they're all based on when we have anxiety and stress is hard to change. And so using REST, play Pleasure, pleasure as a gateway to transformation. So rather than the work having to be hard, what if it was easy? What if you could trust the path path of ease is the whole point of that of this location principles?



Murielle Machiels

And so if with the knowledge and experience you now have, if you could travel back to your old self four years ago, before your panic Cuttack, what is the one thing you would tell yourself that would really resonate with you in that state? Because you're, like, super busy. You feel like you have to continue. So what is the one thing you would tell yourself?



That you don't have to try so hard? Or work so hard? Yeah, that the path of ease and slowness, and like choosing what feels good, is the right path. Rather than like the resistance and the pushing and the hustling in order to achieve a certain outcome, I think I would tell myself that, you know, you're gonna achieve that outcome, and you're still not going to feel good. Right? And there's gonna be another outcome, and you're gonna want to achieve that, but you may not feel good or have the lifestyle you want.



Murielle Machiels

Okay, thank you. Nice. And yeah, so this is rebel leader with a heart, the podcast. So what is your rebel side? And what would you say? Is your heart side or your love side?



Such a good question. I think my rebel side is, is. I mean, I left one career, I left a religion I set off on this grand journey and saying the rebel in me is that you can always like, don't give a

fuck about other people's opinions is this rebel in me, that that we care about what people think we lose ourselves. And when we deeply care about what we want, need and desire, we find ourselves so the rebel in me is willing to change my mind and change my career and change my religion. And then my heart side is the side that says like, Just give yourself what you want, right? Like this heart side is the part of me that wants play and what's pleasure and what slowness and softness. And I think my heart side is realizing that you can build a beautiful business from feminine energy. Because I used to hustle my way to success. And I know that works. And vocation is a business that has genuinely been built at a slow pace, with a lot of fluidity with not a lot of plans with thought and not a lot of structure. And it's still successful. And so it's a reminder, we can lead with our heart and our intuition and still build something great in the world.



Murielle Machiels

Yeah. Great. Nice. Nice. So where can people find you and find your book?



Yeah, so the book is available at Amazon, wherever you buy books. The title is location, design the life you don't need a vacation from. And you can find me and my free masterclass on how to the five shifts to heal burnout and overwhelm and design your best life at take us location.com. And I'm also at Instagram at take us location. So if you feel like you want us location without leaving your daily life, we have courses, we have the book, we have a workbook to help people redesign their life around things that make them feel good.



Murielle Machiels

Nice, and I love the concept of soul Keishon and the name great. It's really nice. So thank you very much, Mel. And I wish you a lot of success with your book. And I hope my readers will read it and enjoy it. I'm sure they will. And I wish you a lot of success in the future.



Oh, thanks. Well, thank you so much. It's such a privilege to be on this podcast. You're welcome.



Murielle Machiels

Yeah, you finished another episode of rebel leader with a heart. If you want more, go to rebel leader with a heart.com For show notes and past episodes. If you love the show, subscribe, leave a review and share it with your friends The more the merrier. Thanks for tuning in and have a great week you rebel leader with a hearts