

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Episode 38

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Annemarie Cross: You're listening to Women in Leadership podcast episode 38. Hi, I'm your host Annemarie Cross branding communication strategist also known as the podcasting queen. Joining me on today's show is Stacey Copas, and she not let a devastating accident that left her a quadriplegic and dependent on a wheelchair at the age of 12 slow her down.

Instead, she has used her life experience and personal philosophies to become Australia's no.1 keynote speaker and facilitating on resilience and turning adversity into an asset, working with organization such as Telstra, South East Water and the CSIRO.

More recently Stacey has added athletics to her repertoire after 22 years of inactivity to further stretch her comfort zone, becoming the first woman in her classification to compete in Australia and is training to qualify for the 2020 Paralympics.

Stacey is an ambassador for the Layne Beachley Foundation Aim for the Stars and in her spare time you'll likely to find Stacey in the nearest patch of sunshine with a book recharging her sola powers.

On today's show, Stacey is going to share some inspiration to help us put things into perspective, tips for dealing with stress and overwhelming for leaders and

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their team, as well as simple strategies to help us stay positive and focus even in the challenging of times. So welcome to the show Stacey.

Stacey: It's a pleasure to be with you here today, Annemarie.

Annemarie: You've got a number of different milestones and in this particular series we love to celebrate alongside of our guest. So you have got your first book and it's titled How to be Resilient and it was endorsed by Brian Tracy, Layne Beachley and Jack Delosa and it was published in 2015.

Stacey: Yeah. It was a very very long process. I've likened it to – it's the closest that I'll probably have to having children. So it's been my book baby.

Annemarie: Fantastic. I know that I've spoken to a lot of women who are in leadership or they're working in their own business and they would love to have their book. To get the time and get thoughts out of your head and on to paper or type into your computer and getting started can certainly be something that is a challenge. So congratulations for doing that. That's great.

Now taking up athletics after 22 year of inactivity to further stretch your comfort zone, and training to qualify for the 2020 Paralympics. Wow.

Stacey: Yeah. It's been a bit of a crazy journey. It's interesting because after I had my accident at 12 years old where unfortunately I actually dived into a backyard pool and broke my neck and drowned. Before that I was an athletic, and I made a pack at that point in time that I was never going to play sport again.

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Pretty much up until 22 years after that that's when I decided it was time to get fit and ended up doing athletics of all things and now set a really big goal to compete for Australia in Tokyo.

Annemarie: Fantastic. Can you ask what happened that had you changed your mind? Because you set that intention you weren't going to do sports anymore. Was it a number of different things that happened over the years or – what happened for you?

Stacey: It was actually just this moment where I had this thought, an urge that came from I don't know where but it was so strong. It was a couple of days after my 34 birthday, and I just had this urge that said Stacey it's time to get fit. I'm like okay.

Annemarie: As you do.

Stacey: As you do cause you get these times where you know there's a time to question things and there's a time not to question things. These was just such a strong intention, message from don't know where. I thought look it's not to be argued with so I thought I'd better do something about it.

Annemarie: Fantastic. Just another milestone you're being featured by the Financial Review, The Australian, ABC Radio, Sydney Morning Harold for your insights on resilience in the workplace. And I'm really looking forward to you sharing a lot of your insights and wisdoms in today's episode as well.

Let's talking about honing things into perspective. When you think about some of the things that have happened for you and then some of the challenges that you use people face help us put some of those things into perspective.

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Stacey: Definitely and again it all comes down to what's happening in our lives at the time. Cause there can be times where something that seems quite insignificant can really have a huge impact and there are other times where they can be really huge things that happened that really don't seem to throw us off track as much as they would.

I sort of looked at things as being a proactive approach. So resilience for me is about regular practices that then enable us to get to the point when these things do happen then they don't have a big hit on us. Probably what I find as being the benefit that I bring to an organization or an audience is that I have some pretty extreme stuff happened in my life. I have some massive massive setbacks.

By sharing some of that stuff and then the things that I did to overcome that then people can do if you're able to do these things to overcome something as difficult as that then perhaps some of these things that we're sort of dealing at the moment if we applied the same things then there isn't going to be that much of an issue in our lives.

Annemarie: Yeah. Absolutely. I mean when I think of how you share your personal story from the age of 12 and even just recently you thought I'm going to get fit again and not only just get fit again you're thinking you know what, my goal is to qualify for the 2020 Paralympics.

You know when you think sometimes we get up and we have a sore back or whatever it might be and it's like I just can't be bothered. So here you shared where you are at and the fact that you made that decision to do that is incredibly empowering.

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Stacey: It's interesting too because I originally was aiming to qualify for the Rio Paralympics. Again, I had a lot of setbacks along the way and this is a message that's important for people to take on board as well is that sometimes the goal doesn't happen as quickly as we'd like it to. I think we all underestimate how long things will take.

So it's important to not be too discouraged but to go okay maybe I just need to rig the timeline a bit. The goal hasn't changed. It's just the time in which it's taken to get there is a little bit longer than I've originally planned.

Annemarie: Yes. Yes. Let us talk about resilience a little bit and please feel free to share some of the things I'm sure you've written in your book and we'll certainly share a link on how we can all access your book at the end of the show.

But speaking about resilience meant for you? How has it shown up for you in your life? I mean obviously there's things that we assume but I never like to assume anything, and I think today we can take some incredibly lessons away from you sharing your insights.

Stacey: For me resilience was probably not the label that I even – that word wasn't even on my radar until probably the last 4 or 5 years till I really started on this journey of being to articulate what were the things that I actually did. Because at the time I would just sort of look at it I'm just getting on with life.

As Steve Jobs so famously said it's not until you connect the dots in reverse and it was a mentor that I worked with that help me to sort of articulate that what I actually am doing is about teaching resilience.

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So it was just going and looking at what were the things that I did consciously and unconsciously along the way that enable me to turn those lows into the highs and to be able to move forward and be positive.

For me, I look at resilience not about typically you hear people refer to what is bouncing back. But to me that implies you're just going backwards and forwards to one point. Whereas I see resilience as an amazing opportunity to take change or adversity and things not going our way and actually then learn from it and grown from it. And then use that to be able to keep moving forward towards the goals and the big visions we have our in lives.

Annemarie: I love the way that you've shared that because it's true when you bounce back you can go from one extreme to the next. But what you've done is you've taken a step back, had a look at what do I need to do to move forward. And I love the fact that you've also shared that you set a goal, you may not have reached like going to Rio.

But you thought okay now I'm going to now qualify, train to qualify for the 2020. How often do you hear, and I mean I put the finger at myself too, how often do you hear when we set goals, we didn't quite achieve them and rather than looking at ways to okay let's just continue to move forward we actually do take ourselves out of the running, don't we?

Stacey: Totally. To me what I see so often is that people give up very easily and it's no fault of their own. Because they're being taught a method of goal setting that is our typical smart goals, and it's a matter of going. But nowhere in that process does it tell you what to do with if it doesn't go to plan and that's what I love sharing now.

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I see resilience is something that really needs to be coupled with goal setting because the reason people don't achieve their goal so often is because they're not equipped to deal with what do I do when it doesn't go to plan.

Annemarie: I'd imagine also too. You did mention that you were working with a mentor and someone who was supporting you. One of the biggest things that can hold us back is our mindset. If our mindset lets us down, our belief and what we're telling ourselves that inner voice that can just have a stump and stop, can it?

Stacey: Mindset is the biggest challenge. So many other things are very simple to do. They can be quite simple skills. But the mindset is the stuff that's playing over and over again in the back of our head. A reason that I didn't do any sports for 22 years was the stories that I was telling myself.

I was telling myself I couldn't play sport like I used to because I was an athlete. I can't do it like I used to so I'm never going to do it again. I just kept that going over and over again. Even when I first started speaking I didn't want to speak about myself because I thought everyone would think I was a total nut talking about myself and why would anybody want to listen to me.

So I had that little old me stuff and it did take coaches and mentors and cheerleaders in my life to say you know. They see stuff in us before we see it ourselves. So it's really important to have that network around you that are going to support and encourage you.

Annemarie: Absolutely. And the people in our lives that will come up to us and say with all the respect and love possible what do you think you're doing. You need to get back

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up and go because they can see right through the things that we're telling ourselves which are just untrue and they're stopping us from really stepping forward and being the brilliant us that we can. I think mindset certainly is very important. Thank you so much for sharing those.

Let's talk about the next point you would like to share some insights around. This is about dealing with stress and overwhelmed particularly for leaders who have teams and go responsibility for other people. It can get really stressful in today's workplace, can't it?

Stacey:

Absolutely. It can and it does especially for leader because our leaders they're got all eyes are on them. This is something that I've learned enough through working with different CEO groups and leaders in different organizations around the country is that they're under the microscope all the time.

So even if they are feeling stressed they're obviously conscious of how that then is relayed to their teams. Sometimes they sort of feel that they're keeping a lead on it but they're not really. So people start to get worried and they sort of thing is there something you're not telling us. So it's really important that as a leader people do find ways to manage their stress.

For me, I find that by being resilient and actually looking at as preventative measure rather than a reactive measure then you find better ways to then get, you don't get to the point where you're really really stress and overwhelmed. So you're looking at it as a proactive approach to stress rather than a reactive approach to stress is something that I'm really focusing on.

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Annemarie: Yes. When you think typically back to maybe some of the things that you've seen that's common in the workplace. When you talk about taking on more of a proactive response and that intertwine with resilience. Are there one or two things that really stand out that if leader started to do that from today that they really would see a significant impact in the workplace?

Stacey: There's a couple of things that I find being really useful for leaders I've worked with but also just things that I've done for myself personally. One of the things is just being very conscious of the language that we use. So it's being careful not to get overly dramatic when things are probably a little bit tougher than they have been.

Because people have a tendency to use words like devastating and horrific and awful when you know really they're not that bad. They might be a little bit disappointing or not quite where you want them to be but it's being careful about the language that they use. One of the ways that I found was probably the best way to start to practice is just through the act of journaling.

It's starting to look at ways that you can find the bright spots, look at the good stuff that's happening and just have a very conscious approach to the way that you actually describe things and being present to actually be able to describe things in a way that's actually truly accurate to where it is.

Annemarie: Yes, it's so true. Particularly as leaders we do lead by example. So we find that we are using really expressive language and terminologies are just way over the top.

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Then that's going to impact the team and they may start using that language too. It's incredible, isn't it, the way that some words that we use can just exacerbate thing when really they can be managed quite simply and quite effectively for sure.

Are there any other areas that you see could be dealt with in a much better way by looking at resilience and how we can implement that?

Stacey:

Probably one of the things that is necessary in business and in life is just being clear on the vision. Because the easiest way to sort of get things back on track when things aren't going to plan is to actually stop, actually take a moment to stop and then go what are we working towards? Just reconnect with that big picture because a lot of times you get overwhelmed because you lose sight of what you're working towards.

In my book, I refer to this as it's your inspiration. So it's being very clear on what does inspire and energize you and being sure to know how to tap into that when you need that little bit of a boost when things aren't going to plan and also as a leader it's then how you share and you demonstrate that to team.

Particularly in larger organizations some people feel that perhaps their role isn't that important or they don't understand how what they're doing they seemed it's not significant in the big picture. But as we know that every little piece is crucial to the overall running and the overall success of an organization working towards their vision.

Annemarie:

So true. Without a vision people don't know what they're working towards and they certainly can't collaborate to move forward to that. Fantastic. Let's talk

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about some simple strategies to help us stay positive and focus in challenging times.

Stacey:

One of the things that I found to be so beneficial and this is a recent addition and I didn't even touch on it in the book, it's amazing how we're always learning, is the importance of sleep. I was one of these one I'll say I'll sleep when I'm dead and I live my life pretty much on five to six hours sleep and sometimes a lot less than that.

I didn't realize I was sort of going I get the job done but I've learned a lot about the difference between being functional and being optimal. I find that when you are sleep deprived you've got a much shorter fuse and a lot of the times when you are finding it's often challenging times then it's certainly magnified by being tired. So that's probably one of my biggest learning.

You know its taken getting involved in sports particularly to learn the importance of sleep and having trainers hammer me on how important it is to have sleep and recovery. I'm certainly seeing the benefits of that of recent times in my productivity and my focus and certainly being able to remain positive even when you have those days and weeks where it seems to snowball with all the things that don't go to plan. But being able to quickly get back on track is really important and so much easier when you're fresh.

Annemarie:

Yeah. I totally agree. One of the other things that you mentioned too was around journaling. I know for some people not try do this do journaling or just spending a bit of time whether it'd be in the morning or even in the evening, journaling and just having some quiet times to refresh and recuperate.

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Now sometimes when we're just so busy and we got a lot of things on our to-do list, those kind of things tend to get push aside. I'll do that another time. But if we don't schedule it, if we don't set our clock to say at that time I'm going to wind down and I'm going to go to bed and go to sleep. It just doesn't get done, does it?

Stacey:

It's so true. It's so true. It's these things that we sometimes seemed quite insignificant but it's the practice of doing things consistently. I know that for me getting the journal habit going it was a matter of starting a 90 day process and it was a no exception process.

Through this time I've actually got – I use Penzu. It's an online journal and with that I can either email my journal in. I can use my app or if I'm at my computer I can type it in.

I had times in that first 90 days where I was almost asleep and I realized I hadn't done it so I actually go back out of bed and went and did it, because if you let it slip once then you're not going to create that habit. So it was a no exceptions approach to it.

I ended up doing it for about 15-16 months without missing a day and then I did drop the ball for a while and then once I got back into it, I'm back up to about the 15-16 month mark now with no exceptions. Sometimes it can be one sentence, sometimes it can be a thousand words.

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Annemarie:

Yeah. Once you just sit there it starts to flow. Yeah. Absolutely.

Stacey:

Reflect.

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Annemarie: Yeah. I'm just wondering. I mean I love that no exceptions. That's a great intention, a great rule. Are you using that in any other areas in your work and life?

Stacey: That's probably the one that I've been most disciplined with which is being good. It's something that again going back and reflecting on that. So there's certain things that I'm working on at the moment where I think winter here in Australia I did go a bit of a hibernation where I did let slip some of my habits around my marketing.

Because again its one of those things with marketing if you're not consistent then certainly your pipeline dries up so I found that happened and that sort of gave me a bit of a kick the backside. Probably one of the things I do everyday no exception is I spend 10-15 minutes on LinkedIn and I interact on someone's post or I send a message, accept a message connections. So it's just a consistent practice.

You know sleep is the other one that has become a real big one for me. The only time I sort let it slip a little bit is when I'm on the road and that can be a little bit different. But you know still doing everything I can to at least be relaxed and on the wind down at a decent hour.

Annemarie: I love that. You know one of the things that I will do if I know its area in my life that I want to schedule but I know it could also be one of those areas that if something happened I'm going I'll just leave it and this is like exercise, something like that. I will schedule it but make sure that there's like an accountability partner.

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So I will go and see a coach or a go and do it with someone else so that I know if I don't show up that means I'm not only letting the person down, my coach is going to be there too. So sometimes by scheduling something and having an accountability partner or someone that you know is here to support you that can be an incredibly motivator for you. Have you found that as well?

Stacey: Absolutely. For me like my exercise I travel by taxi so I have a recurring taxi booking for the times that I go to the gym. So I know that I'll get picked up at this time. I'm at the gym at this time. I get picked up to come home at this time and everybody is different. It's about understanding your own personal motivators. But it is interesting especially around doing things with the buddy. Because we all let ourselves down all the time but we don't want to let anybody else down.

Annemarie: Isn't that interesting? Yeah. Absolutely. What are some exciting things in store? I mean obviously we shared a biggie which is training for the 2020 Paralympics. Are there any other like another book in the horizon? What kind of things are you working on at the moment?

Stacey: I'm actually just about to launch my rebranded new business model. I sort of started off with resilience for result has been my business since I started about five years ago. So I've finished putting the finishing touches on the Stacey Copas Academy of Resilience and I see resilience and turning adversity into an asset. It's an essential skill, essential life skill.

And I've got really big vision to see million of leaders around the world learning and sharing it. I see myself as the pebble in the pond who was blessed with adversity to learn what I've learned. So by dropping that pebble in the pond,

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working with leaders then they can then go and share and teach their teams as well.

There's certainly some really big stuff coming up which I'm excited but also a little bit scared. I think that's always a bit scary when you're about to put yourself out there in a big way.

Annemarie: Well that's connected to, you know, obviously is really connected to your why and your purpose and when you set a really big goal like that it does, doesn't it. It exciting and it has this little butterfly as well which yeah it's great. I love that. How can people get in contact with you? How can they get a copy of your book? What's the best way?

Stacey: The best way to find me initially is just at my website which is staceycopas.com which I'm sure you'll pop in the show notes or LinkedIn is probably the social network that I'm most active on and also the book it can be found at howtoberesilient.com or from any of the major online retailers.

Annemarie: Fantastic. Any last words of encouragement that you'd like to leave with people today?

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Stacey: One of the things that I'd love people to really spend some time reflecting on and acting on is something we touch on earlier and it was about creating that support network around them who were going to be their cheerleaders and are going to give them support but also who they can support and empower at the same time,

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because so often sort of get caught up in what's in it for me when really all this stuff is an exchange of value. It's a two way street.

So seeking support and creating that network but looking at how you can support somebody else's as well. And the other tip there is just to avoid comparison especially as women. You know women in leadership I think the comparison issue is a really big one. It can really threaten to dent people's confidence. Really when you're comparing you're only seeing a snapshot in someone's life. You're not seeing the whole picture.

I'm liking it to we see a duck or a swan on a lake and everything looks like it's so graceful. But underneath the water the legs are paddling furiously to keep everything afloat. So creating the network and being conscious to not compare in a way that can be to your detriment.

Annemarie: Yeah. Beautiful. Beautiful way to end the show. Thank you so much for coming on the show. Again, we will include all of the ways that you can connect with Stacey on the show notes. To get on to the show notes annemariecross.com/podcast38. Thanks Stacey.

Stacey: Thanks Annemarie. It's been a pleasure.

Annemarie: As I've done over the last few shows I'm inviting one of my fellow Microsoft brand ambassadors to share a tech tip in how we can use technology whether it'd be the Microsoft Surface, an app or a process in order to help us streamline our business.

Now if you are using a Microsoft Surface Pro and you've got a favorite app or the way that you're using it to streamline your business, let me know. Send an email

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out to podcast@annemariexcross.com and we'll do our shout out for you. So let's dive into today's tech tip. Hey, Megan. You're with us again today. What's today's tech tip?

Megan: Well today's tech tip is how to pin items for easy access. So you know when you're trying to find an app or a file or a folder and you just need it there ready to go. So in Windows 10 if you go to start menu and right click on an app it says pin to access bar.

So what happens it tends become a little icon that sits down the bottom of your device. So for me I have word and excel and things that I regularly use including some of the documents. So it's there. I don't have to search for it. It's just in there already to go.

Annemarie: Now if you've got some apps that you've pinned and then you think you know what I'm not using them as much, is it easy to unpin them as well?

Megan: You just right click on the app and you say unpin.

Annemarie: Fantastic. I love that. Cause how many times do you go through the search and where is it, and click, click, click and this is certainly going to streamline that process. Fantastic. Megan, how can people find out more about you because you are the tech queen?

Megan: I am. You got to www.techcoachhq.com.au and find me @megsamanda or meganaiemma on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Don't forget to check out our Tech Made Simple Facebook group for small medium business owners, startups and entrepreneurs.

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Annemarie: Fantastic. Of course as always I think you're going to create another video for us just to be able to walk that through. Yes. Megan, you're doing that again for us this week.

Megan: I am. We have a video for each week.

Annemarie: Fantastic. Of course go to the show notes and you'll be able to see Megan step us through that tech tip.

Now before we end the show just a quick message. Are you involved in the health and wellness industry? If you are, my team and I are in the process of developing the health and wellness podcast network, the platform for health and wellness specialist to share their voice. We want you to be part of the community. To find out more and to get on our VIP list just go to annemariex.com/viplist.

That brings us to the end of another episode. I hope you will join me again next week. Each and every week we have another inspiring guest just like we did today with Stacey, and I'm sure you've taken away lots of notes to inspire and empower you to be far more resilient in the workplace.

If you haven't already subscribed to our iTunes channel please go and do that so each week you can be notified when we published a new show. All you need to do is go to annemariex.com/podcastitunes. While you're over there, we would appreciate it so much if you could leave a comment and also rate the show.

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That means that we'll get push out to more inspire Women in Leadership and they hear the show as well. Thank you so much for that. Have a fabulous week. We'll see you again next week. See you, Stacey.

Stacey:

Bye.

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