

# Episode 060 Building Your Brand in the Midst of a Storm with Stacy Kaat

In this episode, we discuss:

- The importance of having a vision and writing it down
- Hire a coach to help you!
- Surround yourself with the BEST people!

Rhonda: I am so excited to be joined today with my friend, Stacy Kaat. And she's not only a number one bestselling

author, a speaker and also personal brand coach, she's also a woman who has gone through divorce and knows what many of you who are listening today are going through, what you're feeling like, some of the challenges you may be experiencing. And Stacy and I met several years ago, and it felt like we had known each other for a long time and I'm so grateful that we have had the opportunity to stay in touch. Thank you for joining us today.

Stacy: Well thank you for having me, Rhonda. I haven't really publicly spoken about my divorce, so this is kind of fun

and a little bit scary.

Rhonda: I know that there's an element of vulnerability that comes with sharing our stories. I just want to say; you are

welcome to share as much or as little as you want here today. And then we're going to transition into some keys on the personal branding side, but I just really feel like having this conversation is important because there may be women that are listening that are really going to resonate with what it is that you have to share. Thank you.

Stacy: You're welcome.

Rhonda: So, go ahead and share with us a little bit about your divorce story here as we're grabbing our coffee here on a

chilly day here in Wisconsin, right, or tea?

Stacy: A rainy day at the end of June.

Rhonda: If you're listening, grab a beverage. You can decide if it's alcoholic or not, right?

Stacy: You can always put a little of that Baileys in your coffee!

Rhonda: I mean, right? Just saying.

Stacy: Why not? So, I was divorced I think about, or married, I'm sorry, married, about 15 years. And he was a great

guy. There was a lot of great things about him, but he was kind of heading in a different direction and I was heading in another direction and there were a few main things along that path that happened that last year or so that really changed the course and kind of led toward the divorce. I think one of them was a family vacation that we were on. And I just remember his sister asking me ... She was about my age, in her late 40s, and she's like, "A lot of my friends are getting divorced. How about you?" And I said, "Well, a few of them are, but yeah, most of my friends are still married. Some of the marriages are rocky." She said, "Well, how do you feel?" And I said, "Well, I could take it or leave it." And I was kind of shocked that had come out of my mouth. I was like,

"Wow, that just came out of my mouth."

Stacy: But I think the reality of it was, is that in my mind, maybe not consciously, I knew it was going to happen. We

had moved from one house to another, we downsized, we got rid of a lot of things. We were simplifying our lives. We were paying off our debt. We had accumulated debt during that whole real estate crash. And there was

a lot of things that happened.

Stacy:

I just want to say this again that the man that I ... Dave, he was a great guy. And he was very supportive of me our entire marriage. Everything I wanted to do, he supported me. Any idea I had, he supported me. And so, this wasn't a case of "he's not a nice guy, he doesn't treat me well, we don't get along", because we did. We got along really well. I could sense that his life path, the way his lifestyle was going, was not what I wanted. I had envisioned more of a very healthy lifestyle. I love being outdoors and I like to kayak and eat healthy, grow things in the garden and things like that. And that was the kind of lifestyle that I wanted, and I didn't feel that was happening anymore. We were starting to separate.

Stacy:

I was taking a class, and one night I was getting ready to leave for class and I was wearing a black dress and a black jacket. I was all dressed up for this specific class. And I gave him a hug and a kiss goodbye. And I said, "I'll see you later." And he said, "I fear you." And I'm like, "What do you mean? You think I'm going to shoot you?" I was carrying a gun because I was going to a concealed carry class, and that day we had to dress up and pretend we were going to a wedding and how are you going to conceal? So, I was wearing this dress. Of course, I probably looked kind of cute, right? And it must've just been like, wow, he saw me looking the way I did and kind of saying goodbye, and he just said that to me and I was shocked. And then he said, "I fear you're going to leave me."

Stacy:

I don't even know what I said. I cannot remember what I said. All I know is...I got into my car and all the way to the class, I just thought, "I think I'm getting divorced." So it was really a weird awakening, like he knew, but I didn't really know. I mean, he kind of confronted me with something that must've been on his mind for a while. And then in my mind, I guess I just was ignoring the signs or ignoring the feelings because I thought, "Hey, I got married. I'm married. I have a child and this is how my life is supposed to be. This is the path I chose. I didn't plan on getting divorced. I'm not getting divorced." That was how I always felt.

Stacy:

That was kind of the beginning of it. I wrote him a really long note, kind of discussing some of my disappointment in our relationship, which was, I don't know, something I really don't want to get into. Then he read the letter and the next day he said, "Do you want me to leave?" And I was like, "I think I need a little time to think about that." This happened really fast, in just a couple of days, right? All of a sudden it went from normal to like, *holy crap*, there's this note and he thinks I'm going to leave him and now he's asking if he should leave. So yeah, that's kind of how it began.

Stacy:

And then I spent about a month in deep thought, "What am I going to do with my life?" I did not have a job. I was just working around the house, doing my gardening thing, fixing up houses. We owned a rental property at the time. I was taking care of that, taking care of our kid, and doing all that kind of stuff. So, I went on a little vacation by myself or with some other people, but not with him, and I came back still undecided, and we went out that night. When I got back, we went up to see a band that was playing, and I asked him to dance and he said no. And then I knew the answer. He didn't want to dance with me. So, then I think it was a couple days later I asked him to leave.

Rhonda:

Well, and anybody that knows you, gets to know you, or has the opportunity to follow you online, you can just see the light that you bring, right? I mean, so you are a dancing type of person, right? Full of energy, full of life, so in that moment it was probably the symbolism as much as it was the fact that he didn't want to dance, right?

Stacy:

Yeah. The whole thing is kind of surreal now that I'm talking about it again, because this was six years ago. Yeah. Six summers ago in August.

Rhonda:

I think one of the things that I think we often find or I see for women that are in mid-life, right, that are going through divorce is you're not only dealing with the stuff with your spouse, but your parents as well, right? And you're aging and so you're trying to find your way in that. So at the time that you had gotten divorced, your mom was still around. Correct?

Stacy:

When I asked him to leave, right after he moved out, about a month later, my mom told me she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I was like, "Whoa." Yeah, that was really big. So yeah, that all happened at the same time. I was in shock with that. So here I am going, "Oh my gosh, what am I going to do with my life?" And he had just moved out and so I spent a lot of time with my mom and just to see her and see her as much as I could before we got ... We didn't get divorced until a little over a year later. We kind of hung on. He didn't live with me, but

we stayed married because then I would have health insurance. And like I said, I didn't have a job and I didn't know what I was going to do with my life because I quit photography for a while, and I was doing the real estate stuff. I didn't have a paying job.

Rhonda:

Right. Well, and it's tough because I think, and the reason, and I know it's emotional, right? Because it's like you've got the two people that are closest to you in your life at that point that are either parting ways are going to be parting ways and it's just a matter of time, right? I think as we were kind of preparing for our time together, I know that a lot of the suggestions or tips that you have for the woman that are going through a divorce stem from that time period, right, when you were in the midst of it? And honestly, I think you and I must have met just shortly after the divorce because it's not been that long. If you really look at it, it's not been that long. It feels like it was longer. Kind of looking at, here you are, you're needing to reinvent yourself, right? Or pick up things that were passionate to you that maybe you had left along the side? So, talk to us just a little bit about that.

Stacy:

I really was kind of at a loss because I didn't know if I wanted to go back to photography. I was shooting weddings and portraits, and I kind of really got tired of doing that and I wasn't sure that I wanted to do that anymore. So really, I just went and got a job at Home Depot in the garden department and they need summertime help, right? I stayed unemployed after he left until the next spring because I was dealing with my mom and I was going back and forth to see her a lot. And she stayed around for a while yet.

Stacy:

So, I got this job at Home Depot and that was kind of like, "Okay, well this is fun, and I can Zen out on these flowers for a really long time." They just had me watering flowers. I am in total Zen mode and I feel really good about this, but "Wow, I don't know what I'm going to do with my life. I'm sure I'm not going to stay here. This is really not challenging, even though it felt good for the time being, and it was kind of fun helping people. I enjoyed that. But I thought, "I got to go back to work."

Stacy:

That job ended in July when the garden center kind of slows down and they kind of let me go and I was like, "Woohoo, it's 4th of July. I'm going to have a little bit of fun for 4th of July, and then August 1st, I am going back to work." So, I decided, "I'm just going to go to a networking event. I'm going to meet some people and I'm just going to throw it out there. Hey, I'm a photographer." That's what I did. I guess at that time I must've set up a Facebook page, a LinkedIn page, probably just those two. I'm sure that's what I did. I can barely remember anymore. And I just said, "Okay, I'm going to start doing photography." And I just told people, "Yeah, I do photography. I don't know exactly what it is that I'm doing. I'll photograph anything but just don't make me photograph your wedding. I don't want to do that. I'm done with that."

Stacy:

Then when I got on LinkedIn and I started looking at all the pictures and making connections and then going to networking groups and meeting the people and then connecting with them online, I realized there was a really big disconnect between what I saw online and what I saw in person. That's where the personal branding thing started taking shape, even though I didn't know it then. But that's when I was like, "You need to get a better headshot. You need to look like you look like in person. I want to feel like I'm virtually handshaking you, like it's you that I see, not somebody that's five years younger, 20 pounds skinnier, and different glasses. It doesn't look like you." And that really was odd to me and it still is when I see that today. It kind of makes me laugh.

Stacy:

That kind of started me on that path of, "Oh my gosh, these people need my help," because the world had changed in 10 years, right? There was no Facebook. People didn't have websites. We didn't have as many small businesses and entrepreneurs back then as we do now. With this surge of entrepreneurs, they needed more than a headshot. They needed other pictures and stuff, too. What happened then is it was a real slow progression. And as that progressed, I realized I kind of needed some help with my whole life because I was having a hard time focusing and dealing with the divorce, dealing with my mom dying. I need to find a place to live. I had a daughter still living at home with me.

Stacy:

So, I hired a life coach, a person who helped me separate the different segments of my life and set goals in each place and helped me with my mindset and creating a positive outlook for the future. How am I going to deal with my mom? How am I going to deal with the divorce? How am I going to deal with finding a place to live and making it a place I *lore* to live? Where am I going to have my office and my studio? She helped me build

that just by giving me the tools to manage all that. That was really cool. I totally forgot what your question is. I feel like I'm rambling now, but-

Rhonda:

Good. I think the importance, right, of having a vision, writing it down, segmenting out these areas of our lives, because I think as women, it is so easy for us to just be swirling all of he stuff and the negative stuff ends up clouding the positive stuff when there really are some positive things that are happening that we can celebrate, right?

Stacy:

Totally.

Rhonda:

But it's hard. I think guys have an easier time, right, of like, okay, they're very segmented. "This is my life and I'm going to put it up on the shelf and decide when I'm going to take it down," whereas we, not so much, right?

Stacy:

Yeah. We're a little more swirly with everything.

Rhonda:

Having the vision and writing it down in those respective categories, I think, is great. I know that was one of the things that helped you, hiring the coach, certainly. Another tip for people that are listening, you know, I think you and I met, fortunately met when I think we were supposed to meet, right? But, I wish in some instances that I meet women before they start that journey because I can help them along and be that coach that's helping them, and there's some aspects of that that we pull in other experts that specialize in certain areas, but having somebody to kind of walk through as they're reinventing themselves and asking those tough questions, and a coach, I mean, man, it's important. It really is important.

Stacy:

It is. Luckily, I had a lawyer who was a mediator and so her whole idea was that everything should be good for everybody in the party, for me, for my daughter and for my ex-husband. It was nice having that type of an attorney, and my husband chose not to have an attorney, and so that kind of made it easier, too, to a certain degree. My divorce was probably less complicated than most people's divorces would be because he was just, "Well, whatever you want." And of course, I was taking him into consideration. I said, "Do you want the house? Do you not want the house? Do you want to sell the house?" And he said, "I want the house." I said, "Okay, the house is yours."

Stacy:

It was really easy. But in a lot of other people's circumstances, I'm sure it will be much more difficult and maybe more assets to navigate through and a lot of different issues. We live a block away from each other right now. I bought a house a block away from him. So, I mean, we chose to make it really easy for all of us. But when there's complications or there are so many things, there are so many questions that you don't know the answers to, to have someone help you weed through that, and I think help you see some of the options, is very beneficial.

Rhonda:

Yeah, absolutely. Well, and you know what? I think one of the things that I have helped women with is determining, okay, there's a lot of different ways that you can get divorced. And I think everybody wants to say, "Oh, well, we'll just do mediation because it seems the easiest, the cheapest, the simplest." And I always say it depends on the parties, right? There are people that probably think mediation is great for everybody. I personally do not believe that. I believe that it depends on who's coming to the table.

Stacy:

Circumstances. Yeah. If I had a husband that was not ... I mean, I knew he was going to be cooperative, but if I were to have a different..., it may not have worked at all.

Rhonda:

I think a lot of times, the mediation aspect, a lot of times what I see is, when you have a spouse who is more in a position of control and there isn't a level playing field, at least in respect for one another, right, it can be used as a tool to keep the spouse from asking too many questions or digging too much or asking for the facts or whatever. It's like, "Oh, we'll just do mediation and everything will be rosy and we'll just go our own ways." And it's not always quite that simple.

Rhonda:

I just think that a lot of times people need to look at the personality of the spouse and not just assume, "Oh, everything's going to be amicable," because, well, no. That's the number one pitfall for divorces. It's going to be amicable and he's going to be fine. Yeah, they're fine for right now in the beginning. But what happens if this

Divorce Conversations for Women Podcast © 2019 https://www.womensfinancialwellnesscenter.com/podcast thing goes off the rails? Because now you start asking questions or you gather some more facts or whatever, and you want this to be all out contentious? No, but do I think that the mediation piece is something that folks can consider? Yes. With your eyes wide open in knowing their spouse, because remember, our spouse, right, soon to be ex-spouse knows all our hot buttons, all our triggers. To think that they're not going to use that to their advantage would be foolish.

Stacy:

Well, and in my case, the thing that happened was, is that my lawyer was a mediator. He never even met her. She and I just did all of the work because he didn't want to be involved. That's how little he just ... What is the word for that? He just let me take care of all of it, kind of like a lot of our marriage. I just kind of took care of the stuff that needs to be taken care of and he just let me do it. And so, it was exactly the same way as our marriage. He just said, "Okay," and I just took care of it. But it may not have been that way if he would've showed up at the table, even if he would have showed up to the meeting.

Stacy:

I know that she was really concerned about me because I did not have a job and she wanted more money, for me to get more money. And I said, "No, I'm not doing that." That was one of the things that she was worried about me, like, "You're starting a business. You have a daughter. You're going off on your own and you have nothing." She was very concerned about that. So, yeah, but I mean, I was lucky it worked out the way it did.

Rhonda:

Yeah. Well, and I think there's a fine line, right, between ... **Women are resourceful.** They will find a way, right? However, and I don't want to speak out of turn, but a lot of times you see the impact of those decisions' years later even, you know what I mean? It hasn't been easy for you to build a business. It hasn't been easy for you to be starting over, right?

Stacy:

Right.

Rhonda:

Each situation's a little bit different. And I think nobody's going to say, "Hey, you should just forego everything and do your thing." I think expressing the concern ultimately, right, at the end of the day, it's each individual's decision on what they want to do, on how they want to proceed with that. But I'm glad that it worked out for you for many reasons, and I think those are some really great tips. One of the other tips that you wrote down as we're chatting was surround yourself with the best people, and I could not agree more.

Stacy:

Yeah, that's huge. Huge because what happens when you're going through a divorce is that I had family members and friends who did not support that because of the belief system that you're married, you should stay married forever or do whatever you can to make it work out. And because I think part of it was they never really saw us like looking like a couple that didn't get along, because we got along. But the support system with my family was really hard for me because my father, who had been through several divorces, I could tell he was not happy about my decision at all. So, that kind of stunk. My mom, I think she kind of knew, and she was very supportive of it. Of course, I wasn't going to have her around for very long.

Stacy:

But then going to the networking events, that's where I met my support. That's where I met the different coaches and mentors and businesspeople that could help me get my business going. I found my business coach through networking, and I made amazing friends, you being one of them. I am surrounded by the most amazing people, and I did that probably not really even knowing, but I know now that it was a great decision to do that, to be around people who are inspiring and encouraging and doing great things. Yeah. So I think that's really important, especially when you might have family and friends that don't support where you're going.

Rhonda:

Yeah. You know what? I think it is part of that natural process for relationships to change as you're making some of those big decisions, and it's never easy and it's sad and it's hurtful. But I was just talking with a girl this morning, one of my clients, and I said, "When stuff like that happens though, I really believe that situations like divorce or challenging situations really allow us to see how people really are." And she's like, "Yeah. My future daughter-in-law unfriended me on Facebook," just because.

Rhonda: Okay. Well, you unfortunately get to see, right, really where people are at. Are they going to kind? And even if

they don't agree with the situation, it's always different than what people see on ... Even when people tell us things, it's always worse than what they tell us. And there's always more to the story. There's always more to the story, and I think probably from your dad's perspective, right, having gone through it, he knew the pain.

Stacy: He knew pain. He did not want to see me in pain. And I know now that I look back at it, that's why he wasn't

supportive of it. He still worries about me in that way because he knows what it's like to be alone and be in that

in between state as an adult, having to start over with a relationship.

Rhonda: Yeah, for sure. So, as we wrap up our time together, I know time always goes so quickly, I want you to share, if

you do have a favorite quote.

Stacy: Okay. Now this quote, a friend of mine said this to me and I don't think ... Somebody might have said it, but we

don't know who. "The key to going through hell is traveling fast."

Rhonda: Say it again.

Stacy: So, "The key to going through hell is traveling fast." So, when I say that, I mean get help, surround yourself

with those great people, hire people to help you, because that helps speed up that process and it'll

make your life so much easier if you do that.

Rhonda: Yeah, I love that quote.

Stacy: I love that quote. I should really get that framed.

Rhonda: You should.

Stacy: I should get that framed. I do love it. And that's just a recent quote and I'm like, "Ooh, that is a perfect quote. I

love that quote."

Rhonda: When you told me that quote, because you had shared that with me prior to recording, I love it because I always

say, there's times where you wish, "Gosh, I really wish I could shortcut this for people," just like with our kids, for those of us who have kids, right, do we really have to watch them go through that painful experience? And unfortunately, we do, right? Because it's those situations that build character and refine our purpose and all that kind of stuff. And so, if we can't, right, sidestep it, I always say it's a labyrinth. There's one way in and one way out. You file and then you get the marital settlement agreement. But there's all this stuff that goes in between,

right? So how can you get through it as quickly and as efficiently as possible so that you can move on?

Stacy: Yeah. So, you can move on with less headaches, less headaches.

Rhonda: Less headaches, right? So, as we share the quote, one other thing that I usually like to have people share it as a

success story. If you don't want to share the names that's fine, but just share with us a way that you've been able to help people develop their personal branding that has allowed them to really enhance what they're doing

online.

Stacy: Well, I'll share a story that was shared publicly by a girl who I photographed recently, Heather Schaefer. So,

Heather sells Ruby Ribbon undergarments that are shapewear garments for women, right? She's a really cool lady. She came in for a photoshoot, and we did the photographs and she got them all done and started using them online. A few weeks later I ran into her at an event and she was like, "Stacy, I have had a big boost in my visibility and exposure online." She's like, "I've had the most team growth than any other month I've ever had in

my business and more cold contacts and a significant increase in private messaging online."

Stacy:

She was just so excited about that. I said, "Heather, will you please write me a review or a testimonial?" And she did. And so, she wrote it up, basically that but a little bit longer. And when you get stuff like that, when you understand that or when you see people utilizing their pictures and knowing that it's worked for them ... She also is really great with their messaging. So the messaging with the photographs together is really what does it for her. But to see that that really boosted her confidence ... When you get pictures taken of yourself that are really good, it boosts your confidence. It makes me feel good about putting yourself out there. It gets you excited. And then I think with her messaging and that, people felt that energy and it really exploded for her, which is great to see. I love it when I can help people with that.

Rhonda: Yeah, for sure, and-

Stacy: It's good that I can be a great boost for people.

Rhonda: Right. Well, and things have shifted, right? I mean, it's such a great opportunity for people to reinvent

themselves and go through the process of identifying what they want their personal brand to be. And you do such a great job of capturing people's personalities around what it is that they're doing. So it's not just, "Hey, I'm standing behind a boring background with a headshot," right? "And the angle's bad and it doesn't even look like me." Starting with a nice headshot, right, that you can put on social media, that allows people to feel like they can get to know you a little bit. Do they know who you are? Do they like you? Do they trust you?

Rhonda: I know one of the things that you do, because I've gone through the process with you is, "Okay, well what are

the three words that really describe you? Before we even start snapping the pictures, what is it that you want to convey to your audience?" I remember, mine, it was I want to be viewed as knowledgeable, trustworthy and

loyal. Yeah. And that came through in the photos.

Stacy: Right. It's hard to say because it's a visual thing, and to me also, it's about eye contact and it's about do you look

like you look confident about what you do, and do you look friendly? Because if you don't have those three things, eye contact, friendly, approachability, and then the three words are kind of like an extra. What can we extract out of these? Which one of these pictures says that the most? So that's kind of how I like to work it because I want people to have a connection with you when they see your face online. And then when they see you in person, they're like, "That's the same person. That's the person I met. I know who that is," and they get a

feel for who you are.

Rhonda: It's always challenging because you're like, "Oh my gosh, I look so good. I don't know. Is that still the same

girl?" No, but you do a really good job and you've got a team of people that come alongside and do the hair and the makeup, which again, I think one of the most important things when we're doing and taking photos or doing video or whatever, it's like, we see enough online where people just wake up out of bed, don't do their

hair. I'm like, "Can you just do a little something here?"

Stacy: But, I mean, you want it to look like you. I always tell people, "Don't do so much. Do what you normally do,

but because you're under these big bright lights, every little detail shows and it's a flat picture, or even if it's a video, it's very similar. People see you under these big bright lights, so you just got to do a little bit more just

because of that."

Rhonda: Absolutely.

Stacy: You still want to look like you.

Rhonda: Absolutely. Well, I just want to thank you so much for taking time to share not only with me, but with our

audience, a little bit about your story because I know this is one of the first times that you've shared that, so I'm honored that you took the time to do that. Thank you for sharing your passion with us, the passion for helping, in our case, the women really stepping into their personal brand, rebuilding a presence online that's reflective of

their personalities offline.

Stacy: Well, thank you for having me, Rhonda. This was really fun. I'm wondering who's going to hear my story. I

hope it helps other women. There could be people having similar little things like that happen and they just

need to hear someone else's story to help them step up and move along the path.

Rhonda: No, that is awesome. Well, we certainly encourage everybody to check out your contact information. They can

visit your website at stacykaat.com.

Stacy: Correct.

Rhonda: ... as well as all of your social media handles that will be included in in the show notes. Thank you so much for

joining us today.

Stacy: Thank you, Rhonda.

**QUOTE:** "The key to going through hell is traveling fast." – unknown

SPECIAL OFFER: Mention this podcast to receive an introductory rate on my Personal Branding Course when it launches in 2019.

#### **RESOURCES:**

Co-author in the book series "Brilliant Breakthroughs for the Small Business Owner; Fresh Perspectives on Profitability, People, Productivity, and finding Peace in your Business." Her chapter is titled "Why your headshot could be a turn off and how to turn it on." Stacy guides you to align your vision with your personality so you can gain confidence in how you present yourself online and in person. She collaborates with you to create authentic pictures that showcase your expertise, help you attract the right customers, so you can get paid what you are worth!

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Stacy Kaat Stacy Kaat

<u>Stacy Kaat Photography</u> <u>LinkedIn | Facebook | Instagram</u>

Visit the Women's Financial Wellness Center for a <u>full directory listing of experts</u>. Be sure to reach out if you would like to connect personally with the Women's Financial Wellness Center. You can visit our website or grab a complimentary 30-minute consult.

Leaving a positive podcast review is hugely important: they help the podcast get discovered by new people. Please spend 5 minutes of your time to leave a review on your preferred listening platform, we'd love to hear from you!

KEYWORDS: divorce, conversations, women, financial, wellness, marriage, finances, #midstofdivorce #contemplatingdivorce #clarity #decision #journey #selfcare #selflove #passion #hobbies #entreprenuer #selfrealization #networking #branding #personalstyle #photography #professionalheadshot #lifecoach #mentor #vision #mediation #supportsystem #quote