



158: 5 Favorite Things I Listened To This Year

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 158. This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. Every week, I invite anyone who struggles with decision fatigue or chronic hesitation to join me for a few minutes for a thoughtful story, a little prayer, and a simple next right step. This month on the podcast, I'm changing up the format a little bit and inviting you into a final mini-series where I'm sharing some of my favorite things. So far, I've shared my favorite five books I read this year, I shared 10 favorite things I watched, and today I'm going to share five favorite things I listened to.

Why all the favorites? Well, first it's a time of year where sharing favorite things is just super fun, thank you for that Oprah. But second, in just a few short weeks, The Next Right Thing Guided Journal will release, and one of the reflections in the book is a page that I call a happy list. On that two page spread, you're invited to record what you read, watched, listened to and made each month, four of my favorite things to keep track of. Speaking of listening, here's a word from this episode's sponsor, Talkspace.

If you're feeling overwhelmed at the moment, congratulations, you're human. There's a lot to be anxious about between the nonstop news cycle, the pandemic, the holiday season, and the undercurrent of grief many of us feel every day from things not feeling or looking like we're used to. We need to take care of our mental health more than ever before and working through emotions with a licensed therapist is a good place to start. Talkspace is making therapy affordable and accessible for all because we all need extra support to feel our best.

Talkspace has thousands of licensed therapists trained in over 40 specialties, including anxiety, depression, relationships, and more. No matter what Talkspace will find you the right therapist to help you achieve your goals. Talkspace is a fraction of the cost of in-person therapy. Instead of waiting for an appointment, you can send unlimited messages to your therapist, 24/7, and they'll engage with you daily five days a week, and now Talkspace covers 40 million people for online therapy through their insurance or employer. You can check your eligibility at [Talkspace.com/insurance](https://talkspace.com/insurance).

Talking with a friend is different than talking to a licensed therapist, who has the expertise and knowledge to give practical guidance. Talkspace gives us the support we need at an affordable price. Right now, just for listening to The Next Right Thing, you can get \$100 off your first month with Talkspace. To match with a licensed therapist today, go to [Talkspace.com](https://talkspace.com) or download the app, make sure to use the code NextRightThing, all one word, to get \$100 off your first month. That's NextRightThing at talkspace.com. Now onto today's episode, listen in.

The Next Right Thing with Emily P. Freeman

Well, this is the third of a four-part series on my favorites of 2020. If you haven't noticed by now, these are slightly less scripted episodes than our typical ones, mainly because Emily needed to give herself a little break or four, and relax on the episode planning just a little bit. Plus this is super fun, right? We can chat it up, like we're just talking together. So that's what we're going to do. Looking back over this year and picking out favorite listens of the year, I realized, similar to things that I watched, there are all kinds of things that we can listen to, music, podcasts, books. So I ended up choosing kind of one from each category.

The first category is album. I tell you what, maybe you're similar to me, but I will not think of an album that I listened to in 2020, without first thinking of Taylor Swift, *Folklore* and *Evermore*. Say what you want about her, I think she's brilliant. First as a songwriter, she wrote and released two albums during a pandemic, but also as a marketer, she wrote and released two albums. She didn't tell us until right before they were released, which is typical of the way she does things, but she's doing her thing and I'm here for it. She gave us something to listen to, something to look forward to, and to try to figure out this summer because all of her work is often cloaked in some mystery. I stayed up till midnight, the night *Folklore* released and listened with my girls to every track one by one, and it was a whole mood, and I was all the way here for this mysterious woodsy way of this music. I mean, this is coming from a person whose favorite weather is basically fog. So of course I love this new vibe of hers.

My three favorite tracks from *Folklore*, the Last Great American Dynasty, *Peace and Exile*. Well then, during a Zoom call, a few weeks ago, my daughter texted me and said, "Taylor Swift is coming out with a new album tonight." And I was like, am I having déjà vu? No, I'm not. It was so very exciting. So I haven't listened to *Evermore* quite as much because it just recently came out, but so far, my three favorite tracks from that album are Willow, Champagne Problems and *Evermore*. Bonus, I also watched the Long Pond studio sessions on Disney+, which is not really a listen to, although it kind of is because she sat with her co-producers and talked about making the album during quarantine. And then they played each one of the songs in order that are on the album, so it was kind of a watch and to listen to.

A second, favorite thing I listened to this year was the podcast with Knox and Jamie. It's a podcast, it is hands down the podcast I listened to and loved the most this year. These two often say humor breaks down walls so truth can enter. This year for me, and for so many people, as the walls came tumbling down around us, we were desperate for both truth and humor. I needed some humor and levity week after week, and Knox and Jamie though, they were living through the same pandemic we all were, they continued to deliver us that. There were some nights when I couldn't sleep and I would turn on the podcast, and I would literally laugh myself to sleep sometimes. Sometimes I would shake in the bed and hope I wouldn't wake up John, but having their friendly, familiar voices and banter in my ears was a gift I didn't know I needed. Some of my favorite episodes from them are their flavor town episodes, where they share listeners spicy takes on things and also their Bachelor and Bachelorette previews. Even if you don't watch the show, their previews are always highly entertaining.

A few specific episodes that I enjoyed this year, episode number 337, The No's of Dating, episode 361, Taylor Swift Explained, and episode 380, the Business of the Podcast in 2020, which they do an episode like this every year where they share kind of the behind the scenes of the business, and I love hearing them talk about that, super transparent and entertaining. So thank you, Knox and Jamie for continuing to put in the hard work and bring light and joy and truth and levity in a year where we desperately needed all

of those things.

Number three, favorite thing I listened to is kind of a broad category, Spotify playlist. Ever since Kendra showed me how to use Spotify last year, I'm not kidding. I literally was like, I'm so embarrassed, will you teach me how to use Spotify and show me what to do and how to listen to stuff? Because this seems amazing, but I don't know it yet. So she taught me how to use it, it's become the one app I can't live without. Making playlist has never been so easy. My inner middle schooler is still in awe that we can make a playlist with a few clicks and have all of our favorite songs at our fingertips without having to listen to the radio with our index finger hovering over the record button, hoping the radio announcer won't talk over the musical intro and mess up our clean recording. Raise your hand if you remember this life.

Well, three lists that I've had on repeat are three lists that I've made. Actually the first one is one that my son made and... I take that back, I don't really have this one on repeat, but when I think about 2020, and one of my favorite things I listened to, the playlist that he created for our drive to school is one of them. I won't necessarily recommend that particular playlist, but what I would recommend is, if you are someone who has a commute, especially with your kids, is to have them create a playlist for the commute as sort of a soundtrack for driving to school or for driving home from school or from practice or whatever the case might be. This year for us, that playlist really is only reminiscent of the beginning of the year because, since March, my kids have been schooling from home, but that playlist does hold some memories that are sweet, in spending time with him on the way to school, at least at the beginning of the year, and even now sometimes we'll listen to it just driving to Target or driving around town, and it still brings back those memories.

So I will say that the playlist concept is one that I highly recommend. Another one I've had on repeat is the playlist that I've shared here on the podcast, which was my Autumn playlist that I made after having my sister on the podcast, and she recommended how important it was to pay attention to our five senses when we are decorating for the seasons. So I created an Autumn playlist thinking about things that we hear. I haven't made my Winter playlist yet because I've been listening to more Christmas music, but I can't wait to make my winter one, and I would encourage you to do the same.

A final list that I've listened to a lot is one that I call the work, and it's because it's a reminder for me that it takes work to be an ally for my Black and Brown brothers and sisters. It's not enough to be not racist, I want to be anti-racist, and this playlist reminds me of that. Again, this is not necessarily a playlist that I would say, go listen to mine because it's so great, but this is another one of those things that can become a practice for you. I would encourage you to make your own playlist of something that reminds you of the work, rather than just listening to mine. Although, I can share mine, as well. One of my favorite songs on that playlist is called Instrument of Peace by The Porter's Gate. It's essentially a prayer attributed St. Francis put to music, and it is truly beautiful.

I'm late to the game, but Spotify has opened up a new world of creating playlists for things I want to remember, like doing anti-racism work. I also have a playlist called trust, and it's just simply for me, the songs may not be meaningful to anyone else, but it's made up of songs that have always brought me back to center in the midst of a hard time throughout my whole life. I dove deep, I went back to college days, high school days, songs I would always turn to. I don't listen to that playlist very often, but when I really need to remember true things, that's when I'll pull out that playlist. So again, I would encourage you to make playlists if you don't, playlists that remind you of things that you want to remember, work that you

want to get done, anything that could serve as a soundtrack for something that is important to you and your life.

This fourth listen, I feel like I'm cheating a little bit because I've already done a books episode, but this one is a book I listened to, it's called *The Gown; A Novel of the Royal Wedding*. It takes place in both London and Toronto, London in 1947, Toronto in 2016, and it goes inside the workroom where one of the most famous wedding gowns in history was created and explores the dressmakers who made Princess Elizabeth's wedding gown, who is now Queen Elizabeth. So I mentioned this book and I put it here mainly because it wasn't really necessarily a favorite book I read this year, but it was an enjoyable listen from this year. So it felt like it actually fit in this category.

When I think about this year, I remember so much of specifically this summer, was spent with me listening to this book in my ears and kind of walking around. I remember specifically, cleaning my living room and actually even doing some... I think I was reading my sister's book at the time and doing some editing of the room. She talks about clearing the space and I was doing that while listening to this book. So it has some fond and nesting type memories for me. As I've said before, a couple of the categories that I love to listen to when it comes to books, are fiction books and also like memoir or autobiographical books. Those are the ones that I tend to gravitate towards on Audible, whereas nonfiction books or books where I might want to take notes or underline things, I tend to like to have the hard copy of those. So again, the book is called *The Gown; A Novel of the Royal Wedding* by Jennifer Robson.

All right, the final category of things I listened to and loved this year, and this one's kind of a weird one, but it's Voxer. If I am my most honest and why would I not be, I would have to tell you what I spent the most time listening to this year was voices on Voxer. First, if you don't know what Voxer is, it's a free app, it's for your phone, and it's essentially a voice messaging tool where you can easily communicate with friends, family, team members, either one-on-one in small groups or in large groups. I use Voxer for both personal and for my business, from planning with my assistant Jenna, to leading the content team at Hope Writers, to making plans with my co-founders, to have real and true heart to hearts with my sister and my dearest friends.

True story, we have honest, real conversations on Voxer. It's a tool that's made it possible to remain connected this year, even while we've been apart. When I reflect on what were my most favorite things I listened to this year, it only makes sense to have Voxer on the list, not because of Voxer, but because of what that app allowed me to do. We still ran a company, we brainstormed ideas for the future, encouraged, confronted, lamented, celebrated, cried, and kept up all on Voxer, with friends and family and coworkers and hearing voices of people I love and respect and work with and are collaborating with. That was such a gift to me, and it was one of my favorite sounds of 2020.

As you consider the favorites things that you listened to this year, ask yourself, what was the soundtrack of your life in 2020? What sounds will most represent this year to you? What music, what song, what album, what podcast brought comfort or clarity? What we listened to may or may not always contribute to helping us make better decisions, but in my experience, the music and voices I hear on purpose always helped me live a better life as I continue to do my next right thing in love.

Thanks for listening to episode 158 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of remembering what were your favorite listens of 2020, can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow, because while it's true, this is a podcast about making decisions, but the bigger truth is our daily decisions are actually making our lives. I'd love to connect with you online or on Instagram. You can find me on Instagram @EmilyPFreeman or online at EmilyPFreeman.com, where you can also find a transcript of this and every episode. A quick reminder, this is the third of four episodes, a little mini series I'm doing where I'm sharing some of my favorite things from 2020.

The reason why I'm doing it, is because I have a journal coming out. It's called The Next Right Thing Guided Journal. It comes out January 5th, so just a few weeks from now, and in that journal, one of the reflections that I encourage is for you to pay attention to what you read, watched, listened to, and made that month. So in light of that, I thought it would be fun to share all those things that I listened to and read and watch and made this year, and we have one more episode to go in the series. But if you want to pre-order the journal, of course I would encourage it. You can go to wherever books are sold, wherever you like to order your books from, and you can pre-order The Next Right Thing Guided Journal. And hopefully that way it will arrive to you the week that it comes out, give your future self a gift and order The Next Right Thing Guided Journal.

It is a year long journal, but it's not dated. So you would put your own dates in, essentially it's meant to run for 12 months, but it can be any 12 months you want it to be. So I would encourage January to December, because that's just super fun, but of course you can start at any time of year and just pick up wherever you want to and then it will run for 12 months after that. You can also go to EmilyPFreeman.com/journal. There'll be links there for you to purchase the journal, as well as more information about it, I would love to see you there.

Well, in closing, I just want to say a heartfelt thank you. In an episode talking about favorite lessons, I have to thank you for tuning in to listen to The Next Right Thing podcast for leaving reviews, for sharing with your friends, for sharing on your socials and just word of mouth. It really does go a really long way. And I'm grateful for your attention, for your encouragement and for your consistent willingness to show up and consider what your next right thing might be. So you have helped to make a truly difficult, heartbreaking year a little bit more lovely. So as always, thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.