



## 220: Our Favorite Yeses

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 220. This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful, but distracting hum of entertainment, you're in the right place for discerning your next right thing.

Today's question. When was a time you said yes and were so glad you did? I asked that question last week, and this week we'll share some of your answers. Why? Well, four years ago I said yes to writing *The Next Right Thing* book. And three years ago, this week, that book was released into the world. So today's episode is a celebration of sorts. Of the book anniversary, yes, but also of you and all the big and small ways we're learning to discern our favorite yeses by simply doing the next right thing in love. One more thing I'm celebrating today. I just learned from my publisher last week that the book has now sold over 100,000 copies. This is a huge milestone for a book. And it's the first time I've reached it after writing five books. It's humbling to know that there are 100,000 copies of *The Next Right Thing* book in the hands of actual, real human readers like you. And I just want to say, thanks. Now let's celebrate those yeses. Listen in.

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Several years ago, I read a book by producer, screenwriter and author Shonda Rhimes called *Year of Yes*. As an introvert, she hired a publicist so that she could avoid public appearances, which even if you're not in the business, you know the job of a publicist is to help you land media, not avoid it. Well in *Year of Yes*, she documents her one year long commitment to say yes, after her sister complained during Thanksgiving one year that she never said yes to anything. That's when she decided to say yes to everything for one year. And it revolutionized her life.

At the time I read the book, I was in a season of learning how to discern not only my yeses, but also my nos. I remember being slightly annoyed at the premise that saying yes would lead to good things, which was honestly not exactly the premise, but that was an easy criticism for me to give at the time. I remember thinking, I wish someone who says yes too much would write *Year of No* and see how that transforms their life. Well, maybe someone has written that book or maybe I'll write that book. But I digress.

Another book I read years ago was Donald Miller's book, *A Million Miles In A Thousand Years*. That's an old one. That book is about moving from being what he calls a consumer of your life to being a producer. When two movie guys contacted him to make a film out of his memoir, he discovered his real life was void of some things that he wanted. He ended up editing his real life to tell a better story, not for the movie, but just for the life. Courage is a funny thing. Sometimes it means taking the risk to do that big thing, knowing you could fail, but facing it anyway. But then other times, courage means saying no, bowing out, staying seated when it seems like you should stand up. When you say yes to things, you

automatically say no to other things, whether you mean to or not. And we all know saying yes comes with automatic nos.

When John and I first got married, saying yes to leading a youth group, girls small group was actually saying an automatic no to being in a small group of my own because of time. Saying yes to writing books over the past 15 years has meant that I had to say no to my career as a sign language interpreter. I had to say no to being room mom in my girls' classroom. And to spending time at Target while the kids were in school. Or pursuing photography for money, or even just for fun in some ways. Saying yes and saying no are really the building blocks of everything we do. Every yes has a no automatically attached. We run into problems when we forget that. And we try to say yes to the yeses and yes to the nos.

It's when we feel the world spin too fast, and when it feels like everything's up against us, like slow traffic and engine lights and sick babies and lines at the post office, those things are overwhelming enough, but even more so when we're trying to live a yes life with too few nos. But at the same time, it's possible to get stuck in the no, to be afraid of yes, because of failure or embarrassment, or worry, or whatever it is or saying no to hard things just because they're hard.

When we got our dog nearly 12 years ago, I distinctly remember how hard it was for me to say yes. First of all, I felt embarrassed because I was not a dog person. I didn't grow up with dogs. I grew up with cats. But at the time, I said yes, because all my people are dog people and I love my people. That's the thing about being a person. What's exciting and normal for one is dreaded and anxiety inducing for another. At the time I remember my friend, June, assured me that one day, that dog will be part of the furniture. Normal, comfortable, at home. And she was right. That was a yes I said that started out as a no, but eventually it became one of my favorite yeses even though it took a while.

What we say yes and no to shape our lives for better or for worse. And today I'm glad to celebrate our favorite yeses. As we learn to do our next right thing, they'll inevitably lead to yeses and no, but oftentimes we forget to pause and celebrate our favorites. So as I celebrate the three year anniversary of saying yes to writing *The Next Right Thing*, I want to invite listeners to share with me some of your favorite yeses, big, small or medium. Maybe listening to some of these yeses will help to inspire your own. We'll start with Christine who said a difficult yes that led to really good things.

Christine :

Hi, I'm Christine and I live in Devon, England. That's my favorite yes, moving with my husband to his home country. This yes has meant leaving friends and family I deeply miss and a job I loved in North America. But it's given me the opportunity to say yes to a few dreams I've been hiding away for a while. This one yes is starting to snowball in a wild yet wonderfully fun way.

Lenore :

Hi Emily, this is Lenore. And my favorite yes was choosing to pursue adoption of a baby with my husband. We're still in the process right now, but we're so excited to welcome a baby into our home through adoption.

Lisa :

This is Lisa from Nebraska. And my favorite yes is taking the opportunity to write and perform a solo Shakespearean theatrical piece.

Stacy :

My name is Stacy and I live in Missouri. And what first popped into my mind as my favorite yes is saying yes to myself. Like saying, yes, I feel like I'm kind of in a process of doing this, but keep saying yes to who I am, even if it's not who I think I need to be, or the culture says. But just saying yes to me and being

gentle with myself.

Gracie :

My name is Gracie and I'm from Maryland. My favorite yes was choosing to start the home buying process in spring of 2021. I had just finished listening to episode 168, Is It Time To Dream Again? And I was so overwhelmed with my life, with my living situation, with all of it. I'm not a dreamer, but once I started to dream about what it would look like to buy a home again, after being recently divorced, I started to get excited, excited about what that looked like for me, for my daughter and it was fun. Well, two weeks later I messaged a friend of mine who is a realtor, four weeks later, my third offer on a house was accepted. And this June I'll be celebrating one year in our home. Thank you for your encouragement and your wisdom shared each week. It's truly the highlight of my Tuesdays. Every Tuesday morning, I wake up and think I get to hear from Emily today. So thank you so much.

Michelle :

Good morning. My name is Michelle and I live in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. My favorite yes was probably one of my hardest yeses and that was to stop being a travel nurse after 17 years and moved back home to my hometown and put down roots.

Carrie :

Hi, I'm Carrie from Reading, Pennsylvania. And for as long as I can remember, I have struggled to make decisions, which is one of the many reasons why I have absolutely loved *The Next Right Thing*. Both the podcast and the book. Being a struggling decision maker means it is also hard for me to decide on my favorite yes. But I'll share a current favorite yes and that is counted cross stitch. And I remember as a kid, I used to enjoy doing various counted cross stitch projects and recently kind of on a whim, I picked up a kit and completed a small counted cross stitch project. In doing so, I discovered that there is just something about sewing and in particular, this kind of sewing that I find very calming and life giving and just plain fun. So I'm thankful that I've rediscovered the joy of saying yes to counted cross stitch.

Kate :

Hi, my name is Kate and I live in a suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota. My favorite yes was saying yes to the house that I live in now with my two children. I said yes to this house in March of 2015, just months after my late husband passed away unexpectedly in January 2015 during a move. And we were supposed to move into a different house. And somehow I found the house that my kids and I are in now, and it's the best blessing for my children and I. We love our neighborhood, we love our neighbors, we love our community and we love our home.

Lorraine :

Hi Emily. My name is Lorraine and I'm from Winter Garden, Florida. It is with great joy that I share my most recent favorite yes. Last spring, I applied to become a baby cuddler in the NICU at one of our local hospitals. It's been a dream tucked deep in my heart, hoping that one day when I retired, I would have time. After a series of crises, that little dream wiggled to the top and I decided I didn't want to wait. I'm happy to share that my yes has resulted in weekly encounters with precious babies, nurses and parents. And I'm so glad I didn't wait to say yes. After all, at nearly 68 years old, there's no time like the present.

Savannah :

My name is Savannah from Montgomery, Alabama, and it's been a rough couple of years. And we moved into a new house almost a year ago. And there were a lot of long, hard days. And my next right thing then was to just let loose and play with my kids. I have three kids, eight and younger, and I just wanted to have fun. Our new house makes a circle from the kitchen to the living room. And so my favorite yes is yes, I will chase you around the house in circles as fast as we can. And we just run and run and giggle and giggle. And it is my favorite yes.

Suzanne Swing Thompson:

I'm Suzanne Swing Thompson and I live in Atlanta, Georgia in the United States. And a recent yes was back in the end of 2018, I felt a deep prompt to share one of my nature photos and a quote in an email called A Closer Look to encourage people to see the beauty in nature that is all around them. And since that time, those quotes instead have become opportunities for me to also share my original writing. And this practice has strengthened my own practice of seeing nature right in the neighborhood and has also created a community of people that I never expected. And so just the growth for me and seeing all the beauty and creation and all that I've learned, and then getting to communicate with others, and for them to communicate with me, has just been an ongoing yes for which I'm really thankful.

Ellie Hobson :

My name is Ellie Hobson. I am currently based outside Belfast in a town called Hollywood and it's on Belfast Lough and I'll be moving to a little village, forest village called Nethy Bridge in the Highlands in June. My best yes, it has happened like fairly recently. So within the past like five years. I was living in Scotland. I had just bought my first house. I was quite excited about being planted and like having just my own little like safe space, I suppose. And it has truly been my absolute best yes. Just the relationships that I've made with like our kids, I feel so close to them. And it's given me so much, like just being immersed in a family environment.

I'm single and going to be turning 40 this year and everything that goes along with that. I sort of love my singleness in many ways, but it's also hard at times. So I always love the opportunity to be involved, just sit down with the family at dinner time. It always feels quite special. They say that with every new beginning, you are always leaving something behind. And that feels like I'm leaving a lot behind to go back to Scotland now. So it's almost bittersweet. But yeah, it's all because it was one of my very best yeses to move back home and I've been here for four years now. And yep, will be moving back to the Highlands of Scotland in June. So thank you for asking us to like connect in this way. It's been great.

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What a joy it is to hear all of these wonderfully favorite yeses. Thanks so much for sharing them and thanks for listening to episode 220 of The Next Right Thing.

I hope this simple practice of naming and celebrating your favorite yes 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, the bigger truth is our daily decisions are making our lives. As always, you can find me online at [emilypfreeman.com](http://emilypfreeman.com) and on Instagram @emilypfreeman. Special thanks to the team at Unmutable for their editing of this episode, Leah Jarvis for her show notes and social media detail. And to you for sharing your yes stories with me. If you don't yet have a copy of the now three year old book, The Next Right Thing, I hope you'll pick one up either for yourself or for someone else. They make lovely graduation gifts for seniors or parents of seniors who are preparing for their next stage of life with young adults. Raising my hand here as I have two who are going to be graduating soon, we'll talk about that later.

You can find the book wherever books are sold. And in case you missed it at the top of the episode, we've now sold over 100,000 copies. But I mentioned that already. In closing, it seem fitting to read a quote from Scott Erickson's book, Say Yes. We had him on several episodes ago. You can go back and catch that one if you haven't heard it yet. In chapter eight of his book, Say Yes, he writes about how bliss is a process. And he says this.

"The death of a dream is like the shipwreck. The vulnerability found in the shipwreck is the failure to

accomplish what we thought we were supposed to do, supposed to achieve, supposed to be. The wreck is where the narrative stopped working for us and left us painfully vulnerable on the great sea. Yet the unforeseen gift of this new vulnerability is that it has placed us in a position where we're open for a change, a change of perspective, a change of identity, a change of possibility. This moment, the shipwreck is just one part of our story, is not the end of our story, but the surprising opening to something unforeseen. And we must go deep down into the hidden seeds of desire in us to find what wants to come forth now that the dream has died."

Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.