

NEW JERSEY *Family*

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The Power of **POSITIVITY**

Westfield mom Meaghan
Murphy on how to find
joy in every day

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practices

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PRIVATE SCHOOL



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HEATED OUTDOOR
DINING SPOTS

On the Cover



Yay

ALL DAY



Westfield mom and author Meaghan Murphy wants to help you be happier and more fully charged.

By Dina El Nabli

“I fit in fitness because
it’s my mood **MAGIC.**”



Meaghan Murphy was at a low point in her life when she was inspired to start actively looking for life’s silver linings. Her father had just lost his battle with pancreatic cancer and she was mourning the absence of her cardinal. Every day she’d post a picture on Instagram with #operationgoodgrief to document one thing that didn’t stink. She kept this up for two years and began to heal.

Now she wants to help others live happier lives with the research-backed tips and advice she’s sharing in her new book, *Your Fully Charged Life: A Radically Simple Approach to Having Endless Energy and Filling Every Day With Yay*, which comes out February 23.

The book is perfectly timed after the unthinkable loss and stress we’ve endured during 2020. “It all goes back to looking for and dwelling on the positive to outsmart our natural negativity biases,” she says. “With practice it becomes second nature!”

A lifelong Jersey girl, Meaghan is a Westfield mom of three (Charley, 10; James, 8 and Brooks, 7) who loves her hometown so much she was asked to be its chief spirit officer. She’s also the content director of *Woman’s Day*, a job she started during the pandemic while finishing her book and homeschooling her kids. She credits looking for reasons to smile and be grateful plus early morning workouts with getting her through such a challenging time.

A certified personal trainer who never misses a chance to exercise, Meaghan is also the queen of all things holidays and regularly shares genius tips on the *Today Show with Hoda and Jenna* and *Live with Kelly and Ryan*.

With years of magazine editing experience under her belt, she’s a

master of mom hacks, too. We caught up with Meaghan to ask her how the heck she does it all and how we can channel our own positive energy to be happier, even when life gets hard.

New Jersey Family: In your new book, you talk about the power of mind-set shifting when things are really hard. What is this and how does it help?

MEAGHAN MURPHY: There is so much great research that shows that deliberately changing the way you think, talk about or perceive hard or scary things can lead to real and measurable positive outcomes. I use a strategy called cognitive (aka positive) reappraisal or reframing. You basically take a stressful situation—like finishing a book and starting a new magazine gig during a global pandemic with three home-schooled kids—and think about it in more positive (although still realistic) terms. You actively look for and focus on what’s positive about a crappy situation. For me that meant celebrating the fact that I no longer had to commute to New York City, which freed up nearly three hours of travel time and guaranteed I was home for nightly family dinners for the first time in years. Just recognizing those glaring benefits helped me gain much-needed perspective and the energy to charge ahead.

NJF: Your nickname was Grumpy as a kid yet you’re always so happy. How do you do it?

MM: I’m not always happy, but I am always grateful. I’m convinced and science has shown over and over that dwelling on the positive and maintaining an attitude of gratitude are magic for your energy and mood. On days when I’m tired, overwhelmed, anxious, I legit stop myself and recognize something that doesn’t suck about the day. For instance, I may have head-butted the laundry basket in the dark and now have a mark on my forehead that has my kids comparing me to the bad guy in *Home Alone*, but I conquered three loads of laundry to earn that battle wound and now everyone gets to go to in-person school in a clean uniform! #momwin

NJF: Where do you get the energy to pack so much into each day?

MM: I say ‘no’ a lot so I can say ‘yes’ only to what actually matters. Your energy is a finite resource. Guard it with your life. Don’t waste it on people, places and things that don’t give you a charge. I prioritize family fun and will 100 percent blow off work Zoom calls to go sleigh riding with Team Murphy. And guess what? When I get back to the home office (after a few hot chocolates) I will do a better job because I’m now operating with a full battery.

NJF: One thing 2020 has taught us is the power of slowing down, doing less and prioritizing self-care. How does that look for you?

MM: I quote Dr. Caroline Leaf, a neuroscientist, mental health expert and author, in my book who says: “True mental self-care is not chocolate cake and spa days. It’s making choices each day that create a life you don’t need to regularly escape from.” I’m careful to



“I protect my sleep
and log seven hours
so I’m not a **MOMBIE.**”

choose wisely: I fit in fitness because it’s my mood magic; I protect my sleep and log seven hours so I’m not a mombie (part mom; part zombie = mombie); I call my mom or my sister when I’m feeling disconnected and need a love charge; I make my bed or organize the kitchen junk drawer if I’m spinning out of control and overwhelmed with to-dos—lots of tiny choices each day that refuel me and ensure I don’t have to escape from me.

NJF: Gratitude is a big theme in your book. How can we teach our kids to be grateful?

MM: It all starts with you. We’re mom mirrors—our kids are a reflection of what we say and do even when we think they’re not watching. So make sure you’re expressing gratitude on a regular basis for the small and big things you appreciate. When your child actually hangs the wet towel on the back of the bathroom door, give them a verbal high-five. When your husband moves a meeting to pitch in for school pick-up, make sure he knows how thankful you are. Also, handwritten thank-you notes are non-negotiable. A text doesn’t count.

NJF: We love that you’re a Jersey girl through and through. What do you love most about the Garden State?

MM: I’m so Jersey and I love when out-of-staters call me out on it! I’ve never lived anywhere else and I probably never will. I run the social media @bestfieldnj as a hobby. It’s a love letter to Westfield. I believe everyone should have a sense of pride and community for the place they call home.

NJF: What’s one mom hack that’ll make our lives easier?

MM: Learning to properly fold a fitted sheet is a game-changer, but I have to show, not tell, you how to do that. I made a video on Instagram (@meaghanbmurphy)! People are also usually blown away with my baking soda soak for pans with baked-on grease. Soak them overnight with baking soda and the grime slides off like magic in the morning.

NJF: If you could choose one takeaway for moms from your book, what would it be?

MM: Everything is going to be okay. We tell it to our kids and it magically eases every physical and emotional ouch. We need to hear it and believe it on repeat, too.



5 Ways to Look on the BRIGHT SIDE

EASY STRATEGIES TO PUT MIND-SET SHIFTING INTO PRACTICE

By Meaghan B. Murphy, author of *Your Fully Charged Life*

Turn a boo into a boo-yah.

One of my most-used phrases is “Yes, but . . .” because I put a positive spin on almost anything. Out of eggs on pancake Sunday? Yes, but we also need paper towels, so I can pop over to the Stop & Shop quickly and also grab chocolate chips and whipped cream. Even if you’re faced with a harsher reality, notice that it’s awful, then try to find something that’s awesome—or at least alright.

Swap have to for get to.

My friend Jen recently started shifting her

mindset around bedtime for her three young girls, going from ‘Ugh, I have to do the routine’ to ‘I get to put these three strong women in the making to bed’. And it changed everything. Life isn’t fun 24/7, but it does not have to suck so hard. This tweak helps you realize that you honestly don’t have to do much; you get to live this life, which, for the most part, you created and create.

Rename what’s lame.

A writer friend told me she used to dread getting feedback from editors—until she began thinking of notes not as criticism, but rather as lessons and directions for delivering better copy. The language you use, the meaning you attach to things and your own preconceived beliefs all have the power to shape how you think and feel. And the good news is, you can change them! (Although still trying to get my kids on board for a leaf-raking par-tay.)

Turn to-don’ts into to-dos.

Trying to save money at the grocery store? Trade “Don’t spend so much!” for “Stick to the list.” For years, I’ve coached my editors to tell readers what to do, not what not to do. Because how miserable is it to be faced with a bunch of don’ts and shouldn’ts? Framing things that way shuts you down. It tells you to not act. Approaching anything from the opposite perspective is inherently energizing because there’s a solution baked in—a way forward rather than a stop sign.

Go from Why me? To Why not me?

When Molly Luppino was diagnosed with a brain tumor while in grad school, she didn’t feel sorry for herself. Instead, she chose to see that she was the right person to take on the cancer and long recovery: young, strong, no kids, on her parents’ excellent health insurance and still living in their house. Her philosophy: There’s often no explanation for why sh***y things happen, but what’s important is how you look at your situation and what you do with it.

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