



MINDFUL IN MAY

Dr. Elise Bialylew, founder of Mindful in May (mindfulinmay.org) and The Mind Life Project (www.mindlifeproject.com) and author of The Happiness Plan, interviews Christine Carter

*Christine Carter, Ph.D., is the author of *The Sweet Spot: How to Achieve More by Doing Less and Raising Happiness*. She is a sociologist and Senior Fellow at UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Centre, where she draws on scientific research to help people lead their most courageous, joyful, meaningful, and authentic lives. Dr. Carter has appeared widely in the media including on the Oprah Winfrey Show, the Dr. Oz Show, the TODAY show, and been quoted in The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, the Chicago Tribune, the San Francisco Chronicle, and The Washington Post.*

In this interview you will learn:

- Why multi-tasking is bad for you
- The difference between mastery and perfectionism, and why you should retire perfectionism and strive for mastery instead
- How envy can teach us about what we want in life

Elise: Christine, welcome to the program. It's so exciting to have you here. I've been a fan of your work, read your books and looking forward to sharing all of your science-backed insights with the listeners. So, thank you.

Christine Carter: Thank you for having me. It's fun.

Elise: Just for those who may have not come upon your work or your books, which we'll get into, *The Sweet Spot: How to Accomplish More by Doing Less, and Raising Happiness*, which we'll explore through the conversation, can you share with the listeners a little bit about your background and how you ended up becoming a happiness expert.

Christine Carter: Yes. It's a good gig, this happiness expert thing. I am a sociologist and I mostly studied the sociology of positive emotions, but really that happened when I was pregnant with my first daughter, not because I wasn't happy but because I come from a long line of very anxious people, both sides of the family. So, I was really just looking for ways not to continue the line of the anxiety. I was really interested in it from a sociological perspective, versus a psychological one, that is how is it that families can really influence the well-being of their children. I actually started off looking at all social structures, like why do certain companies or businesses foster certain emotions in their employees and not others, and how does that even work, and then schools and then families of course are really important in social structure, especially when you have a new family. My daughter's 18 years old now.

Elise: You've been doing this for a long time. Can you give us a sense of where you work, the context of your work and what your main work is now.

Christine Carter: Well, mainly I'm a writer. And I've been affiliated with the Greater Good Science Centre UC Berkeley almost... I guess for the last twenty years. For many years I was the executive director there and now I am happy to be a sociologist and my job is really to translate all the great research that's happening, not just at UC Berkeley but all over the world related to well-being, particularly as it relates to well-being in kids. Right now, I'm finishing up a book on raising happy teenagers. So, that's what I've been working on, I do a lot of talks. My job is to help make the research useful to people.

Elise: It's great to be in a field where your work actually directly impacts upon your family and you can use your own life as an experiment. You mentioned before we started recording that your daughters are teenagers now, but you wrote this book about raising happiness or how to support joyful children in families when they were a lot younger. So, I'm looking forward to hearing the outcome of some of those practices and we're a decade down the track. So we can ask, well, did it work?

Christine Carter: Right, and I wrote *Raising Happiness* because I was reading all the research, and mostly at that point I was working with corporations and that was the social structure I was working with and then. I was thinking “oh my gosh, I’ve got to figure this out,” how to apply all this stuff not just to myself but to my kids. And everything I’ve done since, I don’t even pretend it’s not about me trying to figure it out. I do not have it figured out but there’s a lot of research which has been very helpful to me and hopefully will be helpful to you.

Elise: I say the same thing.... teaching mindfulness and meditation, people have this illusion that meditation teachers are really zen and I say to people no, they're the mostly highly strung, that's why they've come to meditation!

Christine Carter: Totally!

Elise: So, what I really appreciate about your books and particularly the most recent one, *The Sweet Spot*, is that they’re just so jam-packed with evidence-based practices and as a doctor by background I really appreciate the rigour in that, and so the book *The Sweet Spot* – you share lots of practices about overcoming overwhelm and experiencing greater happiness in your life. Could you just start to share a few of – I mean it’s jam-packed - but if you wouldn’t mind pulling out a couple of the steps of practices that come to mind in this moment that you found really helpful in your own life.

Christine Carter: Yes. Absolutely. I think if we could just have a moment where I can laugh at *The Sweet Spot*. What you’ve just pointed out is it’s jam-packed with tips, it’s like a book about how not to be overwhelmed but here’s 5000 techniques for not being overwhelmed. I think I kind of overwhelm the readers. So, if you get the book, don’t read it all at once.

Elise: You want to over-deliver. I get it. Again, with this program people write to me, and the biggest criticism is that there is so much information about meditation, there’s so much that they got stressed.

Christine Carter: So, my number 1 tip from *The Sweet Spot* - and I’ll just give you one - is don’t multitask. Let yourself do just one thing at a time. You can serial multi-task, do lots of things in order, but our brain was not designed to run multiple apps at any given one time. In fact, it absolutely cannot do it. So, in the lab in the way that researchers create overload or overwhelm in people, is they just ask them to multitask at really simple things, and what we see is it

hinders us on everything that we want to be good at. It hinders our ability to plan our thoughts, to resist temptation, all the sort of executive function type things, it hinders us socially in that we suddenly lose access to subtle social information, because we're going into a little bit flight or fight even if it's super low level. It doesn't feel stressful but we lose access to a lot of our emotional control as well, at the same time it makes us more tense, so every parent out there knows, multitasking makes us a little short. I don't know about you, but it makes me a little bit snappish sometimes when I'm trying to work and I get interrupted. So, it doesn't work out for us. The reason that we multitask is because it makes us feel productive. Emotionally, we feel really like we're getting a lot done when we multitask and productivity is so highly valued in our world today that it's basically making us feel of value, it makes us feel important and significant and like we're just getting all kinds of things done. And that's one of the most important ways that we can feel culturally and worldwide in western culture. So, the thing to remember is that how we feel doesn't correlate with reality. We're not actually getting very much done, as if we weren't multitasking. Just because we feel productive doesn't mean we are productive. That's my tip!

Elise: You said something about in the lab, that's the way they make people feel overwhelmed. Is there anything else to add there around any of the research? Because I feel like the research is really helpful in convincing us to change our behaviours.

Christine Carter: There's a lot. One thing I like people to try to understand: the neuroscience to me is really interesting around multitasking. So, there's a lot of things going on, but basically we have an attentional network that is managing us multitasking, switching really rapidly between tasks, no matter how many there are. So, remember, we're not running multiple apps at one time, we can't parallel track like that, but what we can do is switch really rapidly, and we have a wonderful attentional network in our brain that helps manage that switching. Now, while you're asking it to switch back and forth between lots of different tasks, it can't do the other things that it would be doing if you weren't multitasking. So, that's important to think about. So, some of the things that we'd be doing otherwise would be filtering out irrelevant information, for example. It would be helping you focus by blocking out all the input that's coming in that's not relevant to what you're doing, or helping you make a transition between tasks, for example. It helps us with a lot of things

related to being able to actually do deep work, to be able to do the deep thinking that we need to do. And, it's also really a gas guzzler in our brain, meaning that it actually takes a lot of glucose and a lot of blood sugar and a lot of oxygen. So, if we get to the end of the day and we feel like brain-fried, well that's because your brain is actually deprived of oxygen and sugar. That attentional network for multitasking uses it up and so we feel duller. And it does have a real, measurable impact- we can measure the cognitive decline in people when they get to that place where the brain isn't just getting enough oxygen and getting enough sugar because it's being suck dried by attentional network. I'm oversimplifying it a little bit. The other thing that happens is that because this is such a taxing situation for our brain to be switching back and forth, it starts to shut down other processes, most notably accessing the hippocampus, which is the part of the brain where we store short-term memory. So, a lot of times I have a forty-something mom say, "oh I just had a senior moment" when she couldn't remember something that she knows she's supposed to know or she's just recently learned, and I say "no, that's not because you're old, that's because you've been multitasking, it hinders your ability to recall information you recently learnt." And then of course for our kids, for the kids that are in school or trying to learn how to do their homework on screens when they're multitasking, it really hinders their ability to learn.

Elise: Thank you. How have you personally actually navigated this challenge. What have you found practically helpful as a way to get this multitasking under control.

Christine Carter: As you know, because you've read the book, I'm really big on habits, and for me the really relevant habits here are around getting into a focused zone. So, having a habit where you clear off your desk, I create fake piles of neatness, like little baskets everywhere. It's a part of a habit, like I clean off the desk before I get started in the morning, you open the windows that you're going to need, you close your email application – and, in fact, I don't even have email on my main work computer – I just access it through a web browser at the time when it's needed. And I have all these sort of things to prevent me... I just went to a different tip... But remind me to come back to email. But basically, I have a whole little routine to get myself into the flow, so it gets me set up and basically what it's doing is creating a fortress against interruption. So, there's a sign on my door, there's all kinds of things that are like I'm going to focus now and that helps because I've been doing this for

years, I sort of know the things that are likely to interrupt me, and I've prevented those, and also, it's really just the routine of it, I do the same tasks in the same order every time and that sort of queues my brain that I'm about to drop into the flow.

Elise: That's great. That sounds good. I liked how you called the fortress of...

Christine Carter: ... against interruption.

Elise: I'm going to remember that. And that is interesting what you're saying. So have this ritual that you fall into before you're going to do something focused, and it sets you up to know "I'm in focused mode."

Christine Carter: I'm in focused mode... What I was going to say about email, is I also have this little plugin on my Gmail called *email when ready* and it actually blocks me from seeing any new emails. So, that way I can have my email open if I need to get files from it for example, but I don't see anything new coming in, so I'm never tempted to check. I know it will not be delivered until I'm done with my focused time.

Elise: That sounds great. I think I've tried one of those before, then I got rid of it because I found it so annoying because I wanted get in there! Anyway...

Christine Carter: That's the thing. It's always going to be shinier, sparklier than sitting down and really focusing on your most important work. Like, email is infinitely easy and also it will take all your time. Email is basically somebody else's to do list for you. The best thing I have ever done - and I don't always do this - I'm not always able to do this, but the days that I don't check email in the morning, that I get right into my most important work are the best, most productive days.

Elise: So, that's really helpful just to hear about the research and then actually a very useful tip that you just shared with us on how we can navigate this multitasking. There were so many things in your book, we could speak for hours, but another interesting topic that came up was around mastery and perfectionism. I think maybe it spoke to me because it's something I have to deal with: perfectionism and really working with that, reform perfectionist over here. Can you speak to what mastery is, what perfectionism is and how are they different?

Christine Carter: Yeah. Actually, they're really different. There is a pretty massive difference between mastery and perfectionism, although I'm also in recovery from perfectionism and perfectionists like to think what they're doing is mastery but it's not. So, mastery is just a high level of skill, right? Like when you've developed a skill and a lot of people see it as talent but really there is no talent without hard work and skill development, but there's also a strategic element of it, right? You can't just work very hard, you have to work really hard at the right things. And it's not relentless persistence, it's persistence in the things that matter. And there is a huge element of rest that comes from mastery as well. So, any athlete isn't going to just work-out 24/7, rest is also a huge part of physical development, and skill development across the board – not just physically, but also mentally. So, that's mastery. And the key thing around mastery is that it's motivated by love, by passion, by positive things, by interest and curiosity. When we develop mastery in something, it's because we're really interested in it, it's because it's something we really love to do. Perfectionism, on the other hand, is the relentless unceasing pursuit of better, no matter how already good something is and it's motivated by fear, fear of disappointment, fear of failure, it's not about joy. It's about the end game and end game is never good enough. It's a terrible feeling. Perfectionism is a particular form of unhappiness. I would say mastery is a result of a particular form of happiness. Really different.

Elise: It's interesting how you put that underline driver as fear. That's really interesting. Makes a lot of sense. And I think because this program really is about encouraging people in the practice of meditation to remember to bring an attitude of mastery rather than a perfectionistic attitude to the practice.

Christine Carter: Can I tell a meditation story on my own part? The sort of difference between these things. So, I first learnt how to meditate as a teenager. One of my high school advisers said you should learn transcendental meditation which is a non-cognitive form of meditation. And so, I signed up and went to the lessons and never felt like I was doing it right. You use a mantra which is kind of a mechanical tool to help quiet your mind and I never really understood what my mantra was. This teacher selected it specifically for you and I never understood really what mine was. I was sort of doing lots of different versions of it, wondering and then finally... I'm wondering why can't I just pick any word. I just never really did it right. And the thing was I didn't want to reveal that I didn't know what my mantra was on the sixth lesson. And that's a

perfectionism. So, I didn't ask the question because I just didn't want to be disappointing. I didn't want to be lame. It was out of shame. I wasn't really interested in it, I was just trying to achieve or trying to please my adviser, I was trying to do the thing right. The result of that was that I never felt very good at it, I never practised regularly, because it just felt like failure. I'd sit down to meditate and I didn't know what my damn mantra was. I already had failed at it. So, then I went to many different types of meditation and never became a regular meditator because I was always trying so hard. I was trying to find *the* technique, that would work for me. I mean there is a little bit of novelty seeking in it, if I just keep learning new techniques, then there is an achievement in that, like I'm interested in learning, but it's really just about, "oh, now I've taken MBSR, now I've taken a Vipassana retreat...". I was racking up achievements in the meditation realm. And so, until fairly recently I stumbled upon some research related to transcendental meditation and I thought, "oh my gosh, there are so many reasons why this would probably be a very good practice for me cause of the non-cognitive thing."

Elise: That's a great story. I'm sure many of the listeners will relate to. There's novelty seeking and the perfectionism but I think the takeaway is yes, if we're gripped by perfectionism and we always have to be perfect, then we can't really expose ourselves, and it inhibits our growth, learning and freedom in a way.

Christine Carter: It really does, and it keeps us away from practices that otherwise might be joyful. So, not very long ago I came back to transcendental meditation and I had a really good teacher who said something that changed everything for me, from a meditation standpoint. At the end of every meditation, he would say: It was easy? And I'm like "no, I was trying so hard. No, I wasn't doing it right." And he basically kept saying everything I would say for example, I would say "oh, I was just thinking the whole time," and he's say "oh, that's the right way to do it. That's how it goes." And so, basically, every time I said , I wasn't doing it right, and that probably wasn't for me, he would reply by giving me a reason why it was the right way, and eventually I was able to see that having it be easy, no matter how it was, was an element of skilfulness. It was like an element of mastery, just not trying so hard all the time. It was just that I did it, that I was sitting regularly. So, it's been really transformative for me. I have meditated twice a day, I have not missed a single meditation in months.

Elise: That's fantastic just that you were released from that kind of struggle.

Christine Carter: Released from the perfectionism of it, of having to do it well. I always needed to get an A, of having to get something out of it other than... and I will tell you the benefits are amazing, like restfulness and everything.

Elise: And that's so helpful and I think so many people come to meditation and they think they're doing it wrong and that they're supposed to be experiencing a particular state of being when actually the practice is around just allowing things to be as they are and not resisting and not having it to be a certain way, and through that relaxing back and just allowing things to be how they are, that's when things start to shift and change., Thanks for that story. I think it's so useful. Really, really useful to kind of normalise this process for all of us embarking on it. In *The Sweet Spot*, I loved that you talked a lot about the importance of relationships in contributing to our happiness and I loved how you framed some of the obstacles that can come up as connection diseases – I really liked that – and one of them you talked about was envy and it stuck out to me because I think we're living in a world – particularly with social media and the way that we all have our lives just up there and you can peer into someone else's life and this “comparison-itis” and envy that can come up much more than in the past. I also think envy is an emotion that we can all feel but there is also probably a bit of shame that can come up around that. So, if you could speak maybe to the antidotes that you have around how to manage this connection...?

Christine Carter: Absolutely. I agree with you that we're living in an era of envy and jealousy, and that is a natural human response to being prompted to compare ourselves to other people. And it's interesting because even if there are really positive aspects of social media, just being able to like something that somebody else has posted, puts us into comparison and judgment like, “Do I like this? Yes, I like this, I'm gonna like it.” But then it switches our brain into judgment and comparison. So the first thing to do really is to just take a step back and recognise that this is what's happening. Right? Oh, there we go again, I'm comparing my insides to somebody else's outsides, and how does it make me feel? That makes me feel crappy. I don't feel good about this whole thing and it creates sort of compulsive behaviours in a lot of people. So, just having a moment of self-awareness where... And it's not just self-awareness, it's also

acceptance and maybe if you're really advanced, a little bit of self-compassion. So, here's the circumstance, I'm looking at Facebook and I'm feeling less than, right? So, I surrender resistance to that, that's what's happening right now. I allow myself this situation because that's the reality. And the reason that I say that is that an acceptance of the circumstance before we even get to the emotions is really important because it does help with the awareness of what's causing it. It's not that so and so is so much prettier or going on a so much better of a vacation. That's actually not the event. The event is that you're on social media. And it's the social media, not the person so much. I know that that's really subtle but if we can bring awareness to the things that are making us feel envious, we can do something about it. In this modern era it's not usually actually things that other people are doing. It's the media. So, we bring awareness and acceptance to the situation and then to how it makes us feel. This is a really important part. And it's not like I'm going to resist that I feel envy, it's: I accept that in this moment I feel envy, I allow it in. We don't want to resist it because what we resist, persists, so we just end up stuffing it down and then it gets bigger in our nervous systems, it doesn't actually go anywhere. So, if you distract yourself from it or you deny that you feel envy, that doesn't work. So, we allow and surrender resistance to however it's actually making us feel. And then, from there we can move forward. We allow it and we move forward like, "okay, so I'm on social media, I feel envious." The obvious thing is maybe don't go on social media so much if that's how it always makes you feel - and that might not be realistic. In a certain situation, it could be something really close-in... I was just coaching another author who feels really envious every time she hears of somebody else getting a book deal. And that's of course normal, it's human to feel this. I think that we can use envy as an indicator of what we really want in life. Like what is it that we're looking for? So, what she's looking for is a book deal. And it stings when somebody else who maybe hasn't worked quite as hard gets it, but she can refocus on what she values and why. When it really comes back down to it, what this particular author said was, "it's actually not so much the book deal as it is just having readers," and so then, she started posting more, on her blog, getting more readers and those kinds of things - it can sort of move you towards what you want.

Elise: That's fantastic. Where when you actually step into it rather than denying or pushing it away, it can open up opportunities because you can

connect with the longing that you have that's making this so painful, and then bring it back to you. And the woman – I just assumed that was a woman – the writer that you're talking about, just coming back to herself in her own sphere of control, of what she can do to amplify that sense of what she's really wanting.

Christine Carter: Right. And then we can always take it a step further too, so it's not just what we're longing for, it's what we already have. So, a lot of these things we actually already have. Turns out she actually had a pretty big readership on her blog. She just wasn't posting that much. And so, to take it from envy all the way to gratitude. What do you already have that you feel grateful for in your life? That's a really important way that we can redirect our attention and create a very different type of emotional experience for ourselves. And, of course, it seems to be some sort of weird logic that I have no science to back up, but I think everybody sort of agrees, that what your attention is focused on, those are the types of things that tend to come into your life. So, if you're like all negative and jealous or whatever, you tend to repel what you really want in life. I don't know why this is or if we have any science to back it up, but it really seems to be one of those universal truths. And so, if you can move to what you're grateful for, then in my experience and in all my clients' experience, those are the type of things that tend to show up bigger. Especially when they're in integrity, it's not just more material wealth that you want, it's a question of what do you really value, what's really meaningful and really fulfilling to you? Not that you can't have the material wealth too but you know what I mean.

Elise: I think also as you're speaking what I get excited about is the way that meditation can be this vehicle for greater self-awareness that allows us to notice what state we're in and what we're actually focusing our attention on, because if you don't have that capacity to be sort of meta, being a witness to your experience, then you don't even realise you're sucked into envy and you certainly don't have the choice to shift your attention to gratitude, to change the perspective. So, it's a point that I'm highlighting as I think a lot of people who start meditation think that it's about just creating calm or something like that but it's actually so much more than that. It facilitates us helping to manage these difficult emotions.

Christine Carter: Absolutely. It creates a greater ability to regulate your emotions and it does create that sense of calm but I think the most important thing is that perspective, being able to watch yourself.

Elise: Yes. Absolutely. I wanted to touch on a couple of things from your older book called *Raising Happiness*, which was *ten simple steps for more joyful kids and happier parents*. Very pertinent to me personally because I'm at the beginning of that journey, so I found it really helpful. I wonder if ten years you the track, you wrote this when your children were younger and now they're teenagers, if you could share maybe one of the things that you actually implemented from the book that you look back and feel was effective and worthwhile.

Christine Carter: What comes up for me as what's really relevant with teenagers, and you had asked me before I think, something about getting kids to do chores or... I was thinking about that because my kids actually do a lot of chores and take care of themselves and that component of it of raising happiness really worked out well for me and my kids, because they're really helpful. And the key there is preserving their autonomy. It wasn't like I was a dictator. I'm really prone to bossiness. I'm basically a professional advise giver. But you can't imagine how annoying it would be to be my kids all of the time. But pretty early on I learnt to stop it, to not comment and to use less controlling language. So, often the bossiness like if I'm tired or stressed will come out. It's not that I'm perfect at this, but I did develop a whole set of little phrases that I use instead of saying "I need you to do your homework right now" or "I need you to empty the dishwasher right now." I'll always say and in fact the kids made a T-shirt for me that says, "What's your plan"? Even though they make fun of it, they're like completely aware of it, it does not escape them that this is a thing I do, but I don't say empty the dishwasher. I say what's your plan for getting the dishwasher empty. And a lot of times they'll be like... Fiona the other day said, "oh, I traded with Tanner I'm going to set the table, he's going to empty the dishwasher." This works for me. Versus if I had said, "Fiona, empty the dishwasher right now," like I wanted to, because it was driving me crazy that it wasn't empty, he would've said, "I'm not doing that, I think Tanner might be doing that." And it creates the sort of resistance versus she just went and set the table and that was good enough.

Elise: Great. The other thing that I loved was the conversation and how you have all these structured conversations in the family. Do you want to speak a bit about that?

Christine Carter: A lot of structured conversations. I don't know which ones you're thinking of, but I will tell a story about this. Yes, we have a lot of structured conversations and a lot of them we'll do over dinner time. So, dinner time is always what are we grateful for. I often will come to dinner with talking points and questions. I mean once they become teenagers, you have them for such a limited time altogether, because I have 4 teenagers now, so it's amazing the things that come out at dinner. They wouldn't come out if I just had a single child probably because they... The other day we were talking about vaping which is really kind of a new phenomenon in the last couple of years, and I was really trying to understand about vaping nicotine – not my kids but all the kids – are the kids vaping marijuana, like what's going on. So, I had all my list of questions and at one point during the dinner my stepson Tanner leans back and puts his head down right next to his dinner plate and sighed and said, "Oh, if we could just not be in a best practices family for once." So I'm laughing. And then he proceeds to tell me everything. That was his moment actually not of resistance but of acceptance, like, "okay, we're going to have another of these conversations. I don't know what you were thinking of...?"

Elise: What I was thinking of and wanted to highlight, I just think it's a beautiful thing and I just really appreciated the way that you from early on had this very intentional way of connecting at that time. I was wondering again, probably self-interested, but when your kids were younger – and also for the listeners that might have younger kids – how you can do this when they're toddlers, what kind of ideas that you could bring.

Christine Carter: In addition to dinner time, which, when they're toddlers is so fleeting, there's bath time and there's bed time, to really begin with the emotion that you hope to invoke. And really I'm so big on gratitude, because it's so closely associated with happiness, and for a toddler, for a really little kid, it's asking them what a good thing is in their life or in their day or whatever. They have no sense of time, they have no sense of anything. So, if you say What's a good thing? you're just asking them about what they feel grateful for essentially, and you're putting them in touch with what they like. And then you're also learning so much about them. So, you're teaching them to savour, you're teaching them a lot about how they look at the world, and, in fact, you're

colouring how they look at the world because, as you know, the brain is a giant pattern maker. So if you tell it to look for the patterns of happiness or goodness in their lives or gratitude in their lives, then they will start to see that all around them. So, having a little ritual every day with the little ones... I can remember when they were really little and you're like okay, it doesn't work to say what you're grateful for but you can say what's a good thing and they're like: I have a birthday. And it can be like nine months away. One thing that's really great about being a human being is we celebrate birthdays in this family, it's so awesome and I get to have one.

Elise: I'm laughing because we went on a beach holiday not long ago and I said to my daughter, "What did you love about the holiday?" We did so many, nature and walking, lots of different rich things and she said "Icy poles". And I said, "Great, anything else that you liked about the holiday?", "Icy poles". There were so many things and it was the icy pole for her what she was most grateful in that ten days. It was really funny.

Christine Carter: I wouldn't be surprised if, in three months, she's remembering the beach or something else about the holiday. It's all going in there, asking them to reflect on something, and that's the other thing, you can ask them what they think of things. What did you think of the walk that we went on and you just have then to be prepared that they might say, like, "I got a blister..."

Elise: I've read something about that which was interesting about just helping them recall helps to actually implant the memory and build the memory muscle which I thought was really interesting. I'm aware of the time. I just wanted to ask you – which I ask all the people I interview – apart from your own books, can you share a couple of books that really opened your mind. I know there must be a bookshelf full of books but...

Christine Carter: I read a lot and I have tons of books that I love. But this book, it's Elizabeth Gilbert's Big Magic, I've read it like three times. The subtitle is Creative Living Beyond Fear and she is really writing to an audience about creativity and artists and writers, and things like, that but I always have my clients swap creative living for, like, personal development or personal growth. Anytime she's talking about creativity, it's really just about growing and like creating the life that you want. I find it to be really inspiring. And also, can I give you another one? Anne Lamott has a new book called Almost

Everything, it just came out. I love it so much. It's a little bit about almost everything that she knows. Subtitle is Notes on Hope. I loved this book so much. It's just like very inspiring and fun.

Elise: Oh, wonderful. Thank you. Another quick question is, and it's sort of along the same lines, if you could have a dinner party and host a bunch of people – they can be alive or not alive, people you know or don't know, like thinkers, leaders, whoever you want – tell me a couple of people you'd want at that dinner table.

Christine Carter: Well, Liz Gilbert and Annie Lamott, because that would be fun to have them talk. I'm looking around at other authors. I actually would love to have people like Eckhart Tolle and Byron Katie and Pico Iyer and some of the people that I consider to be living in our modern world, so they're all alive actually. This dinner party is actually possible. I know some of these people. But the people that I see as particularly enlightened, these are all meditators by the way, people who spent a lot of time in stillness every day and are really doing really profound and interesting work. I'd just like to be in their energy.

Elise: Wonderful. That's great. Thank you. I think you should try and make that happen at least in the next five years. Make sure you film it, so we can all watch it. I wanted to just offer you a bit of space for anything that we haven't touched on that you wanted to share that might be relevant to your work and your offerings.

Christine Carter: If people want to learn more about my work, I have a website <https://www.christinecarter.com> and there's a lot there, free resources, lots of articles, I've been blogging for almost 15 years, so there's quite an archive. If you've got little kids, all the little kids' stuff is up there. I also have a coaching group that is only \$10 a month, so it's just to allow a lot of access to people where we do live calls and have a different theme that we discuss. So, if you have questions, that's the place to go because I answer them all.

Elise: Fantastic. Thank you so much, for your time Christine. It's been wonderful chatting with you.

Christine Carter: Thank you. It's been really fun.

Book recommendations

Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear by Elizabeth Gilbert

Almost Everything: Notes on Hope by Anne Lamott