

Kate Northrup: Hello. I have a super fun episode of Plenty for you today. It is with my longtime friend, Laura Belgray, who is the author of Tough Titties, on living your best life when you're the effing worst. So Laurie's Laurie. Laura is a copywriter.

She is the founder of Talking Shrimp, and she's the cocreator of the copy cure that she created with our mutual friend, Marie Forleo. She's a brilliant writer, and I have been soaking up her emails for over a decade. And in this episode, we talk about how she got a book deal for this book, which is not connected to her copywriting business and how she managed to do that when it wasn't related to her direct expertise because she really felt like she wanted to write a book of essays and not have, like, takeaways and bullet points and not be personal development y, which I really honor and and, like, I think was awesome. I love this book so much. In the episode, we also talk about copywriting, how to be a great storyteller, how to sell more of your programs, and she tells a lot of funny stories.

She makes me laugh. I tell the story of how we met in the basement of a personal development program, and so many other things. So enjoy the episode. You're gonna laugh. You're gonna love Laura, and you're gonna be a better writer after you listen.

Have fun. Welcome to Plenti. I'm your host, Kate Northrup, and together, we are going on a journey to help you have an incredible relationship with money, time, and energy, and to have abundance on every possible level. Every week, we're going to dive in with experts and insights to help you unlock a life of hunting. Let's go fill our cups.

Please note that the opinions and perspectives of guests on the Plenty podcast are not necessarily reflective of the opinions and perspectives of Kate Northrop or anyone who works within the Kate Northrop brand. Hey, Laura. Thanks for coming on, Plenti.

Laura Belgray: Oh, hi, Kate. Thank you for having me.

Kate Northrup: I'm so happy you're here. This is so fun. I've been really looking forward to it.

Laura Belgray: Me too.

Kate Northrup: Okay. So you and I met in the basement of some kind of personal development workshop or something. I don't know. I don't actually so creepy. I don't Yeah.

Remember what the event was or what we were doing, but I do remember meeting you. That was the salient point.

Laura Belgray: And I think it was, like, 2009 or 2000. Right?

Kate Northrup: It was early days. It was early days. And we got to talking with our mutual friend, Marie, who introduced us. And, the topic came up because at the time, I was in yoga teacher training with our friend, Josh. And I had told you this funny story about how I was told by

my yoga teacher, Colleen Saigman, not to adjust women in downward dog in this particular way, especially if they had ever given birth before because

Kate Northrup: why? Do you remember why you should not adjust women in a specific way in downward dog?

Laura Belgray: Because it might cause them to queef.

Kate Northrup: You might cause them to queef. And then

Kate Northrup: there you were just like off to the races, about the queefing. So

Laura Belgray: About the queefing. Yeah. We had a whole queef conversation.

Kate Northrup: We did. And and so I was gonna remember you forever whether we remain friends or not, But luckily, we remain friends. So there's many other funny moments, but that was just, like, one of the funniest ways to meet somebody.

Laura Belgray: It's our origin story. That's a good one. And yeah. And I I didn't even remember how it came up. I just remember queef.

Kate Northrup: Oh, well,

Kate Northrup: I'll never forget sitting in yoga teacher training being told, don't adjust women from behind in this particular way who have had children because they will quit.

Laura Belgray: But I'll tell you what, I haven't had kids, but I decided then and there, I'm not going to yoga

Kate Northrup: The edge. Ever. The edge. Have you been going beforehand? No. I didn't.

Laura Belgray: And I never and I never have since.

Kate Northrup: And now that's all from the table.

Kate Northrup: From the table. Okay. So I wanna know. So you're very funny. Thank you.

Which you know about yourself, and you wrote a very funny book, Tough Titties, which is one of my top favorite books that I read in 2023, possibly. I mean, it's really right up there with, like, all of the funniest books I've ever read. Thank you. Yeah, like Bossypants and, like, you know, short right?

Laura Belgray: That's my dream. I mean Come on. That's my model. That's what like David Sedaris and Tina Fey. Tina Fey's book, like, that was, I think, one of the first nonfiction books I read.

Really? Yeah. Like, I was never really into nonfiction. And so I finally found a non like, an unputdownable nonfiction book in her. It's like I was we didn't want it to end.

So funny.

Kate Northrup: It was so good. So funny. Okay. Yours was equal, Shoulder to Shoulder. I read it while we were away for a weekend with the kids on spring break, and I basically was hiding away from everybody and telling them to not talk to me because it was unputdownable.

But what's interesting about this book is that it is not about your area of expertise that you are known for in your career, which is incredible copywriting and marketing. Why did you feel so compelled to write a book that is not about your area of expertise when it would have been the obvious thing to do?

Laura Belgray: Yes. I mean, the obvious thing to do was something that, like, whenever I thought about it, about writing that book, I thought I would rather eat a bag of hair every day.

Kate Northrup: So that sounds cool.

Laura Belgray: And, you know, maybe someday. But I sell I offer courses on that that cost a lot more than a book and that are actually easier to sell than a book. We'll talk about

Kate Northrup: that in a minute.

Laura Belgray: But I like, this is the book I wanted to write. And I was like, if I'm going to write a book, which I know is a journey full of pain and frustration and crying and all kinds of things. I'm gonna it's gonna be the book I wanna write. Like, I always want I liked writing stories. I loved again, I mentioned David Sedaris.

I loved his kind of writing, that personal essay, like funny personal essays. And so that is what I always wanted to do. So I was like, if I'm gonna write a book, I'm writing the book I wanna write.

Kate Northrup: Was it hard to get the book deal given the disconnect between and I I don't I you know I say this with, like, all love and support because I love it when people do things that are unexpected.

Laura Belgray: Yes.

Kate Northrup: And I honor, admire you because quite frankly, sometimes writing, like, how to personal development ebooks or whatever is a real drag. And it's what I write, and I sort of would rather write what you write. So Which you should. I'm just saying this in full admiration.

Laura Belgray: But thank you. Yes. It did make it challenging to get a book deal. But first to get an agent, because the agents who looked at it, who looked at my proposal were like, love the writing. It's very funny.

But, you know, to be honest, it's gonna be really hard to sell a book of essays or a memoir by someone who's not famous. No offense. And That's like, none taken.

Kate Northrup: You're like, well, obviously, you're not in the digital

Kate Northrup: marketing personal development space because if you were, I am famous. Pond, my tiny little pond where I'm a big fish. So,

Laura Belgray: yeah, and they didn't necessarily suggest it should be a copywriting marketing book, but they were just like, this isn't the kind of thing that sells. So I'm gonna have to pass. And then when I did find an agent who was interested, I made them swear to me. I was like, I'd love to work with you, but you have to swear to me that you're not gonna sell it to somebody who then baits and switches and asks me to write a personal development or marketing or copywriting or how to book. Now, I'm not writing anything with bullet points at the end of each chapter, know your next steps, know sidebars, telling you your takeaways, none of that.

No. Here's what you'll learn on the back cover, not doing it. And so she she said, okay, promise. And then sure enough, she was asked by publishers that she went out to, would she be willing to make it a marketing book or copywriting book, something that our audience would want? And she said, no.

And she had told me like, okay, we're going out with it. You know, these dates in September in late September, set aside these 3 days for meetings with editors. So, you know, I set those aside. And leading up to it, I was like, I'm still holding those dates. Right?

She's like, yeah. Yeah. Keep them open. And then she got back to me. She was like, okay.

Put this, you know, 2 PM meeting with this editor in your calendar. I was like, okay. And what else? And she was like, well, that's it for now, but I'll get back to you. And then the day came and she was like, no, that's it.

Kate Northrup: Okay, great. So you went to that meeting.

Laura Belgray: Went to that meeting and that editor bought my book. See, it only takes 1. Yeah. It only takes 1.

Kate Northrup: And what is saved amount of time you have?

Laura Belgray: Yeah. That's true. I didn't have to do this. Those that other part of the day for you. That's great. Without Zoom calls.

Laura Belgray: Exactly. So it all worked out.

Kate Northrup: That's amazing. Was there like, did it during the process of of finding an agent for this book, was there any point where you were, like, maybe this isn't gonna work? Should I not do this? Like, because something you write about a lot that I appreciate about you is, you know, you talk about how you're lazy. And you and I have that in common.

And so, like, yeah, was there a part that you were just like, this isn't worth it. This takes a lot of effort. Or Not

Laura Belgray: in the agent seeking process. Like, I had put so much work into the proposal.

Kate Northrup: Okay. You were like, I'm doing this.

Laura Belgray: And, yeah, I was like, I am doing this. I'm going to find an agent. And I think I got like 6 rejections before I got a yes. It felt like a ton. Now I know that people get maybe 100.

Total. So I got super lucky, but 6 is nothing. But still to get like rejection after rejection after rejection up to- I'm

Kate Northrup: sure 6 felt like a lot. Yeah.

Laura Belgray: It felt

Kate Northrup: like a lot. Yeah. Yeah.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. When you were writing so I'm writing a book proposal right now. I'm writing I've never written one before, so I don't know what I'm doing. Can you just tell me just this is now just a personal question. Yeah.

What was the process for you? Did you work with a coach? Did you work with like, what was it like for you? What was the agonizing part, and what is your what are your tips?

Laura Belgray: Yeah. So I did work with a coach with, like, my book writing mentor, Suzanne Kingsbury, who I talk about a lot. She helped me from like, she helped me figure out what the book would be, and then she helped me with the proposal. And, like, the biggest help was she gave me a couple of sample proposals. One that she probably wasn't supposed to give me if somebody's, but I won't name them and she won't get in trouble.

And the other one was Jen Sinceros. Oh, yeah. You are a badass. And that was several years old. But it still gave me a structure.

Like, between the 2 of those and checking out the style, like, the one of them was the other one was also in, like, a funny conversational tone and, a book of personal essays. Okay. So that just having that structure was key. I would never have been able to figure it out without a couple to model. And then I'd write each section and then go through it with her, and she would help me and say like, okay, I think we need one sentence here that says this, and one sentence.

Okay. Like it was really helpful to do it with somebody who knew what's working

Kate Northrup: right now and what people are saying yes to. And some people have told me that writing the proposal was harder than writing the book. Do you agree or disagree and why? And

Laura Belgray: the project,

Kate Northrup: yes or

Laura Belgray: no? The proposal was challenging, but it's like broken up into little paragraphs and sections that you don't have to be like, oh, this one doesn't transition nicely to this one. And so, you know, one section is about your comps, meaning, like, what what authors would you be on the shelf next to? Who would you be compared to? And those were Tina Fey.

Sorry. Tina Fey.

Kate Northrup: Yeah.

Laura Belgray: So I wrote a paragraph about each one of those, like the book that was similar and what about it would, you know, be similar to mine. Okay. So those chunks were, you know, I put a lot of work into each of them, but it wasn't like this isn't fitting together. I don't know what to leave in. I don't know what to cut out.

And then the book process was a whole mess of, I mean, months of, I can't fit this story into my book, and I don't know how to make it work. And Yeah. And, my editor, you know, thinks there aren't enough takeaways, and I thought we weren't doing a book with takeaways. And she says, my audience wants wisdom, and

Kate Northrup: I don't have any wisdom. Oh my god.

Kate Northrup: Like, I just wanna tell my stories. Yeah. But inherent in the stories that you told are a lot of takeaways. I would like to share with you what I took away from your book. Yeah.

Okay. So I took away, like, it's okay to do things on my own timeline. Mhmm.

Laura Belgray: I don't have to be good

Kate Northrup: at everything in order to succeed in life. I should be less precious about trying to, like, keep my embarrassing stories to myself because that doesn't matter. And, like, we all do sort of weird stuff that you know, whatever.

Kate Northrup: Yeah.

Kate Northrup: And, also, it we can be lazy where we're lazy because it saves us the energy to really double down where it matters.

Laura Belgray: Yes.

Kate Northrup: So that's what I mean, those are some of the takeaways of wisdom that I got.

Laura Belgray: Which I which I love. And I did work hard in the end to put that in. And I finally came around to her Okay.

Kate Northrup: You did.

Laura Belgray: Point after, like, going to my agents and being like, she's doing it. She's trying to make they're like, no. She just wants these to have some sort of an arc to them. Some kind of a and, that was true. And that, like, I started reading, other people's memoirs and personal essays and some by celebrities.

And sometimes I would read a chapter a story that I was like, okay. That's fun, but what's the point?

Kate Northrup: And I

Laura Belgray: was like, oh, that's how people are gonna read mine.

Kate Northrup: That's how people feel. Mhmm. It is true, but my favorite kind of books are the books that don't tell me what they are telling me. Right. Which is yours is very firmly in that category.

Like, I got to have my own. It makes me feel like you are treating me like a grown up. Right. With some respect. With some respect.

Okay. What was the most fun part about reading writing it?

Laura Belgray: I I just loved getting down on paper, on the page, all these stories that I've been dining out on for years years and telling and obsessing over. I mean, one about, like, the toxic boyfriend, the, you know, the married salsa instructor. I've been spent I assume

Kate Northrup: What were you doing dating him? Let's

Kate Northrup: just talk about that.

Laura Belgray: He's gonna sound really mercenary, but I really wanted those free salsa lessons.

Kate Northrup: Because reading that chapter about the salsa boyfriend, I was just like, I he didn't seem to have a lot of redeeming qualities, and you're so great. So what do you think was going on there?

Laura Belgray: Well, he had what the kids now call Riz. Oh. He had a lot of charisma.

Kate Northrup: Okay.

Kate Northrup: Yeah.

Laura Belgray: He was very He was an alpha, and I had just been in a relationship for, like, the same amount of time with someone who was not alpha. He was wonderful, lovely, funny, great guy, the kind of person I should be with. And I was like, I don't wanna dominate. I don't wanna be told what to do. Totally.

And so I was in the mood for some alpha, and he brought it.

Kate Northrup: He did.

Laura Belgray: And he was also, you know, sociopath and

Kate Northrup: Which is appealing in its

Laura Belgray: own way. Exactly. So you can see why I fell for him.

Kate Northrup: And I'm sure he was a great dancer.

Laura Belgray: He was a great dancer. Which is

Kate Northrup: very attractive.

Laura Belgray: And I was obsessed with dancing. And, having somebody, like, twirl you around and help you get better. I mean, I talk about in the book how we they're they're cliches for a

reason because they're kind of true. And the cliché of, like, falling in love with your professor or with your, you know, with your mentor, with your dance teacher, all of them, your, your psychiatrist, your surgeon, all those people who we feel hold the key to who we wanna be, it's very easy to fall in love with them. And so he was that for me at the time.

I was like, he is my gateway to greatness, to the person and dancer I wanna be. And Jesus. And then I did. Like, I fell for him because I maybe I convinced myself. Or maybe he did.

Maybe he did have that power. I mean, he was he was hot in his weird way. And you

Kate Northrup: did get really good at salsa.

Laura Belgray: I did get really good at salsa.

Kate Northrup: So

Laura Belgray: I'm not really good anymore, but it would I'm

Kate Northrup: sure it would be like riding

Laura Belgray: a bike. Yeah. Maybe. I'm sure it would be. It might be.

Kate Northrup: Sure would come

Kate Northrup: right back. Okay, so you've been married for how many years? 17.

Laura Belgray: Wow. Really? Yeah. It'll be 17 this year, marriage 2007.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. Really into your husband. I love hearing you talk about your husband. I have met him now once briefly, but I hadn't met him for a long what a great guy. But I'm curious, did he get any the squirms at all, like, reading your book?

Laura Belgray: There are at least two chapters that he will not read ever. Ever. Yeah. 1 is

Kate Northrup: The blow drops I gave in the nineties.

Laura Belgray: That's right. Clearly. Chapter 9. Yep. And he was like, there's some things you can't unsee.

And the chapter we were just talking about.

Kate Northrup: Oh, he won't read that one.

Laura Belgray: No, he won't. Yeah.

Kate Northrup: But that makes sense.

Laura Belgray: Yeah. He's like, I don't wanna He has seen that guy once, he spotted him once, like right after we had just met, I was still with Antonio. And Oh, really? Steven Yeah.

Kate Northrup: Oh, I didn't know there was an overlap.

Laura Belgray: Yeah. There was an overlap. Steven and I I was still with him when I met Steven, and Stephen was with somebody. And Oh. Stephen spotted me in a restaurant with the guy.

And, he was wearing a long black leather coat.

Kate Northrup: The guy

Laura Belgray: not Steve. Yeah. The guy.

Kate Northrup: That doesn't seem like And he

Laura Belgray: who that he had had custom made in Korea on one of his dance tours. And he was very proud of this coat, and he called it his metrics coat, but he meant matrix. But anyway, he was wearing that at the table, and Steven thought that he was my bodyguard.

Kate Northrup: Incredible. Incredible. So did you tell Steven not to read those chapters or he just, like, started them and knew?

Laura Belgray: No. He yeah. Well, he knew from the title of one of them. Yeah. Well, clearly, he's about in the

Kate Northrup: early nineties. He's like,

Laura Belgray: I know what that's about. And,

Kate Northrup: speaking of knowing, I know what that's about. Mhmm. You're a brilliant marketer. Thank you. And one of the things that I have learned from you is how to write great titles, how to write great headlines.

And I am wondering, because we have people who are listening in who want more clicks on their emails, who want more people to, like, actually read their sales pages and stuff. What are some of the biggest mistakes you see people making when they possibly title chapters, but also headlines, sales page, like, you know, subject lines, stuff like that?

Laura Belgray: Yeah. Well, especially with Where

Kate Northrup: are we screwing it up?

Laura Belgray: I mean, you're I think you are masterful at it, actually. I get your emails sometimes. I'm like, damn it. That's a good subject line. And I don't steal people's subject lines.

I get really annoyed I get so annoyed when people steal mine.

Kate Northrup: Steal yours. Yeah.

Laura Belgray: So I don't steal yours, but it's tempting. I'm like, how could I make a version of that?

Kate Northrup: I get inspired by yours all the time.

Laura Belgray: Oh, thank you.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. I love your subject lines.

Laura Belgray: Thank you

Kate Northrup: Everyone listening, you gotta get on to Laura's email list. Go to talking shrimp.com. Get on the email list. It's I've been on your email list for over a decade.

I'm never gonna unsubscribe. It's delightful. It's funny. I learned something, and I have become a better copywriter from it. So Thank you.

Laura Belgray: Yeah. And you're so good. So that if that's true, then you do me proud. Under your tutelage. Don't fall in love with me.

Kate Northrup: You hold the key to my greatness. Exactly.

Laura Belgray: Okay. So just thinking about subject lines because it's always on my mind. One mistake. I think it's a mistake is to put it all in title case. I agree.

You want your subject lines you want your email to feel like it is I like to call it an eFAB email from a bestie. You want it to like, when we're going through our inbox, what jumps out at us is something that feels like it's for us. Right. And something in title case, it screams newsletter, it screams something we don't have to look at. That's not to me, that's to everyone.

And other mistakes I see, one of them is when people try to invoke curiosity by, like, you know, by adding the word why. Like, you know, why bananas have the most potassium of any fruit.

Laura Belgray: It's not true. I'm like, I don't care. You just told me the whole thing. I'm not gonna open this to find out why.

Kate Northrup: I'm not curious.

Laura Belgray: Right? Was it evolution? I don't care.

Kate Northrup: But why you'll die without eating bananas?

Laura Belgray: Yes. That's

Kate Northrup: Also kind of sucks, but it's slightly better.

Laura Belgray: No. I would wanna know that. Or, you know, why you'll die without eating this one long yellow thing. But, like, I like something like, you know, what you could make it, a riddle, like, what's long and yellow and prevents leg cramps. I like that one.

Then I'm That's cute.

Kate Northrup: Then I'm like, oh, maybe I've got the yellow leg warmers.

Laura Belgray: Right. Yellow leg warmers. Maybe. A yellow ice pack.

Kate Northrup: Maybe. Yeah. Yellow wellies.

Laura Belgray: Yeah. Exactly. But you like, so Yeah. You don't wanna give away the whole story, and you don't wanna try too hard to be super clever. Also, you don't want like, I like things that are intriguing and you don't necessarily know what it's about, but you don't wanna be too obscure.

You don't, like, you don't want to write something like palm fronds. I don't think. I don't. Maybe I'd open that. I want

Kate Northrup: you to try out the subject lines. Pomfronds. That's it. Lowercase p, lowercase f. And report back No period.

On open rates. Yep. Okay. So you started writing emails for a living, sort of. Yeah.

Like, about when we met? No. Took me

Laura Belgray: a while.

Kate Northrup: Took you a lot. Took me

Laura Belgray: a while. Because when we met, I was Well, back then, I was still mostly writing promos for TV. So I was writing for big clients, and then like as a freelancer. And then I was also starting to write for private clients. Like we've worked together.

You did one of my early clients You

Kate Northrup: wrote 2010. Best sales page for the MoneyLov course.

Laura Belgray: Oh, cute. And I remember it. I It was really good. I remember feeling like this is a really good course.

Kate Northrup: Well, we sold over 5,000 of that course and made over \$1,000,000. I mean, over time, not all

Laura Belgray: it was.

Kate Northrup: And so, yeah, totally worked. I mean, the course is good, but also the copy.

Kate Northrup: Also the copy. You need good copy. Need both.

Laura Belgray: You need a good offer and you need good copy. But, so I was doing that kind of work for a long time and also writing blog posts that had nothing to do with anything. On people. Yeah. On talking shrimp.com, people would opt in from my email list, with the freebie, which I still have, 5 secrets to non sucky copy.

Our friend, Marie Forleo advised me to use it. Like, I gave a talk about it at her, first Rich Happy and Hot live event. And she was like, just, you know, make that a PDF and use it as your freebie. So I was doing that, and so people would opt in for those 5 secrets to non sucky copy, and then I would send them emails that were teasers to my blog post that had nothing to do with copy whatsoever. Incredible.

Kate Northrup: Genius business.

Laura Belgray: Major strategy.

Kate Northrup: But I really loved I've I mean, I've loved your emails all through that time. And one of the things about your emails that you do so well is you tell stories Mhmm. Which is obviously why your book is so good. So for people who wanna get better at storytelling well, first of all, why might somebody wanna get better at storytelling? Let's start there.

Laura Belgray: Okay. Well, first of all, that's what is entertaining. It's we that's what we perk up and listen to. That's what keeps us reading. Like, we're not fascinated by 5 tips to stretch your hamstrings, necessarily.

We might Google it. We might Google it, but we're not gonna be like, oh my God, you have to read this. This is the most compelling thing I ever read. And I had to look up the person who wrote it. Yeah.

But when you tell a story, you are connecting to people, they're connecting to you, and they feel pulled into your world, especially if you're telling personal stories. They don't have to be stories about yourself. You can tell stories about other people.

Kate Northrup: You do that really well.

Laura Belgray: Thank you. But your personality should be in them if we're talking about your own marketing that you're doing, and people get to know you and your voice, and they feel like they feel like they know you, and that's why they will choose you. Like, you're offering the same thing that 400 other people they can think of off the top are offering. They'll say, I wanna learn this from Kate. I don't want those other courses.

I wanna I'm actually buying this just to be in her orbit. So it works telling stories.

Kate Northrup: It works because it connects with people.

Laura Belgray: And it's what keeps people opening your emails and clicking on your stuff. If it's just the same takeaways, actionable advice over and over, people get burned out on actionable actionable advice. Like, you know what? I'm too lazy. I'm not going to do that.

I'm not going to open that because I know I'm not going to do it. But if it's a story, if you, you know, write something that says, like, this is really embarrassing to tell you,

Kate Northrup: It's a good subject line, obviously.

Laura Belgray: I feel like you've sent things out like that. Have. You've definitely sent out things where I'm like, what's the what's she gonna reveal? And

Kate Northrup: It's probably like, I started a podcast.

Laura Belgray: I I don't know. Right. Well, like the one where you ended the podcast. I feel like that that was marketing something. I can't remember what it was.

I think it was something, like, you might have been a competing affiliate for. And I was like, goddamn her. This is gonna get so many opens. Everyone's gonna buy from her, because this was brilliant. Like, everyone's opening it for the story.

They're not opening it for the course that you're partnering with. No.

Kate Northrup: Of course not. But over time, you know, having been a subscriber of yours for a long time, you have trained me that the emails are gonna be good. I really don't care what the email is about. Right. I just open it for the stories.

Your emails and Tarzan Case, I open for the stories. I don't I have bought many of your things. I bought a few of Tarzan's things. But, like, I'm really there for the stories. Yeah.

And, I know that, like, that's true of your entire subscriber base. And I would imagine you have higher than average open rates because you're so funny. Do you think that's true?

Laura Belgray: I I like to think so.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. I mean, have you been compared?

Laura Belgray: No. No. Because it like You

Kate Northrup: show me yours. Exactly. I'll

Kate Northrup: show you mine.

Laura Belgray: I do enough comparison, self comparison

Kate Northrup: to like

Laura Belgray: You don't

Kate Northrup: need to be doing that.

Laura Belgray: All day long. I even like, I have a blocker right now. I have, like, this app on on my phone that shuts off my socials, so that I have to consciously unblock them in order to open them. Yeah. Because otherwise, I'm gonna start scrolling.

Yeah.

Kate Northrup: I mean, there's a sign for that.

Laura Belgray: And be like, oh, that's what I said I was gonna do, and now she's doing it. And I'm like, oh god. I'm so behind. And, Yves, she's so successful. And

Kate Northrup: All that stuff.

Laura Belgray: Ice baths. I can't do that.

Kate Northrup: Amazing. What are you doing with all that extra time?

Laura Belgray: I don't have any extra time.

Kate Northrup: Don't go anywhere.

Laura Belgray: It's anywhere that transfers to no. You know what? I I end up I mean, I always end up opening something if I'm reaching for my phone. Yeah. But I I end up opening the news more.

And so and sometimes that is, TMZ. Incredible. So now I know who's dead. Because

Kate Northrup: then always does TMZ always leave with who's up to a sec?

Laura Belgray: What celebrity is dead? Really? What celebrity wait. It's all 58 year old semi b list celebrities are dying all day long. That's always or and or sometimes these are the ones I don't open.

It's like, you know, 99 year old so and so's cause of death revealed. All we know at the Lincoln bio, you know, just like, I think we know this person died from being 99.

Kate Northrup: I think it's clear. Most

Kate Northrup: likely. Okay. If you think you might be a terrible storyteller, what advice do you have? Like, whether verbally or in written form.

Laura Belgray: Yeah. I I mean, that's a tough one. I pay attention to stories, read a lot of stories, read a lot, read books. Read Talktitties. Read books.

Mhmm. Read great emails, read essays, read things that you know, read great articles that are story based and figure out, like, what kept me reading or what kept me listening to the story? How is this person pulling me in? How did they start the story? Did they start with a long rambling paragraph that explains what they're about to tell you?

You know, like, oftentimes, we as humans find ourselves in predicaments that challenge us, but turn out to be a blessing in disguise.

Kate Northrup: You sound like AI right now.

Laura Belgray: Right. Exactly.

Kate Northrup: That's how chat gpt talks. It is.

Laura Belgray: Yeah. It is. And then but, you know, now introducing the hot new course that's flying off the shelves with something for everyone that will delight friends, families, and young children alike. I mean, it's just word salad.

Kate Northrup: What is the problem with being for everyone from a marketing perspective? Like do you and also do you get people writing back to your emails who are offended? Oh, yeah, I do. I would imagine.

Laura Belgray: I do.

Kate Northrup: And I also because you're a little like,

Laura Belgray: no, it can be a little spicy. You can be.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I like that.

Laura Belgray: Sometimes I curse, sometimes I say things that are borderline offensive, and I'm here for it.

Laura Belgray: And I try not to be gratuitously offensive.

Kate Northrup: No. Not at all.

Laura Belgray: But, like, I don't do it for the sake of it. Like, I'm gonna get people mad, but sometimes I gotta say what I gotta say. Sometimes I'm like, I probably should I would do better to probably to take this out in terms of, not offending people. But, first of all, I always have to remind myself because I'm sensitive. I it stings when people criticize me or write back and, it takes everything in my power not to, like, be defensive and write back right away.

So I have to remind myself that, first of all, no great book, song, movie, TV show, work of art, anything ever created, was created in the spirit of don't be annoying

Kate Northrup: Right.

Laura Belgray: Or don't offend anybody. That is not creative juice. And nothing is for everyone. No brand, no musician, no artist, no anything, no writer. There's nothing that is for everyone.

Like, you I would challenge you to can you name anything that's for everyone? And oxygen doesn't count. That's not a brand. That's not a thing. No one's selling that. Well, not particularly

Laura Belgray: No. There's nothing. There's And for anything

Kate Northrup: Even some people say they don't like water. Right. I said they don't like water. People who are like, oh, no. I don't like water.

Laura Belgray: Right. Someone would say water, and like there are a lot of people who don't like water. Yeah. And then it's also like what kind of water? Soft water, hard water?

Kate Northrup: Totally.

Laura Belgray: Fiji? Tap. Tap. You know? That no.

Fiji is bad for the environment. So, Totally. Which it is. But I like it. I actually prefer it.

And I like smart water. But, yeah. So there's absolutely nothing that is for everyone. And so I have to remind myself that all the time so that I don't try to what are my you know, try to please everyone and start thinking about, like, well, what about this person who's, you know, who really said who said they like it when I write about this? Like, I'm not writing to them today.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. How do you keep all your ideas organized?

Laura Belgray: No. I don't. You don't. I'm terrible. Okay. Love that.

Kate Northrup: That's so permitted.

Laura Belgray: I do keep I keep a lot in Evernote, but then sometimes I switch to notes Okay. Because Evernote, like, locked me out and I can't find my password. And so

Kate Northrup: Thank you for being so normal. And like, great. I can Yes. Sometimes it's Google Docs. I'm very similar.

Laura Belgray: And I'm like, where was that great idea? I'm like, I think I tagged it under ideas, and I can't find it anywhere.

Kate Northrup: Who knows what I labeled it with?

Laura Belgray: The important thing is to write it down. When you have an idea, write it down somewhere. Even if you never find it again. Like I

Kate Northrup: do think it helps you remember just because you've written it down, even if you can't find it again.

Laura Belgray: Right. I agree. That's the whole thing. Yeah. And we cannot I mean, at least those of us over, like, 30 can't trust our memories.

If we do, we're fools.

Kate Northrup: Speaking of age, you hit 7 figures at 50?

Laura Belgray: Yeah. At 50. At 50,

Kate Northrup: which is great. And I know it was a a a, like, a goal of yours for a while. What do you think unlocked that for you? And, yeah, tell me, like, what what was important about, a, that milestone? What mattered to about it to you, and b, what what were some of the steps that, like, helped you to grow to that size?

Laura Belgray: Yeah. Well, what was important about that milestone is just like, it's just a significant number to all of us, no matter how insignificant it becomes in the economy. It's like, I mean, this has always been a joke since it came out with \$1,000,000.

Kate Northrup: It's like

Laura Belgray: I know. But I just it was something I wanted to achieve. I saw people around me achieving it or multiple times, you know, many 7 figures. And I like having money. It's, there's a Real Housewife, a Real Housewife of Beverly Hills named Erika Jayne, who has a song.

She's a performer. And, training for her Vegas residency. And she has a famous song, famous, called It's Expensive to be Me. And it really strikes a chord with me.

Kate Northrup: I'm like, it's expensive to be you.

Laura Belgray: It's expensive to be me. I like, I don't want to fly economy. I like to stay in nice hotels. My husband has a nasty art habit. Nasty meaning he spends a lot

Kate Northrup: on it.

Laura Belgray: He really likes to buy art, and I like to enable that. Yeah. And we live in New York City. Yeah. So that was why that was important to me.

The shifts that I made to get there, one was So I never really finished. Like, when did I start making money from writing emails? Oh, yeah. Thank you for

Kate Northrup: looping back.

Laura Belgray: Yeah, we left an open loop. Yeah, come on back. Yes, so pulling it back in. So I stopped taking private clients at a certain point, like, 20 18 ish. It was a big leap for me, and I didn't know how I was gonna make up for that money and multiply what I was making.

But, I worked with a coach who encouraged me to first of all, I said, I love, the thing I love doing most is, in the copy cure, my course with Marie Forleo, we had started doing these live with Laura sessions, and people would just feed me questions, and I would answer them on the fly. No prep, no homework. And then I would also do copy makeovers, which was a bit more work.

What I loved the most was the on the fly answering questions. And so he said, well, if you love doing that, you should have a group program.

Great. And I was like, oh, I never thought I was capable of having a group program. It's like, I I just didn't think of myself as a leader. Because I know I don't even like to tell people where to sit at a dinner party. So it's like, am I gonna lead a group?

And but I created a thing called Shrimp Club, which is a mastermind group program and it filled, and I've been running it ever since. And that made me as much as I was making with from private clients alone. It's incredible. Right. And then I launched my own course, which was inbox hero that year after so when I when I, like, got rid of clients as dedicated to making my emails pay me.

I had always written them as just like fun stuff, and then I'd written for other I'd used my copy for other people to help them make money. Right. I was like, now I'm gonna use my copy to make me money. So I started selling my mini courses more, writing more emails, making them more of a sell sometimes, and that brought in a lot more dough. And then I launched my course inbox hero.

So everyone was telling me I we need a course of, like, before and after examples of emails. And so I created that, and that brought in, and I couldn't believe it. I was like, I didn't think I was capable of having a launch. Because it's like, oh, to have a launch, you have to do 3, you have to do 3 videos, you know, you have to do it, you know, Jeff Walker style. You have to do the 3 videos and have affiliates and drive everyone to the videos and then get them to.

And this, I just I was like, the course was a PDF, and I sold it through my emails. A couple of Instagram posts, and it And

Kate Northrup: it worked. And it worked. And did you have, like, a launch runway for it where you kind of led up to it in emails where you were warming people up or were you just like, ta da.

Laura Belgray: No. I did. I did, like, consciously. I knew I I planned it as a launch on my 50th birthday. I was like, I'm gonna put this out on my birthday.

And even though I'm gonna be away and celebrating then, I'm like, I'll just do the work ahead of time. I'm like, no. That never happened. But knowing that, I wrote, like, 2 weeks of e of emails about emails. I was like, it's, I won't call it email month.

I'll call it email half month. And so talking about the importance of emails and what you can do with email and what's possible. Are we, being

Kate Northrup: I'm not sure.

Laura Belgray: Drowned out by sirens?

Kate Northrup: Zay, do we stop for, We're good.

Laura Belgray: Okay. Good.

Kate Northrup: Good. Awesome.

Laura Belgray: Feels like New York. Yeah. Similar. Yes. So, yeah.

So I had that run, like, a 2 week runway to it and got everyone whipped up with excitement and sold it. And it was I I was just amazed. It was a 6 figure launch. And I couldn't believe, like, oh, I can do this. I can do this by my I had been doing it as an affiliate

Kate Northrup: Yeah.

Kate Northrup: For other people, but using their assets and their Right. It's like, okay. It made me feel capable. Yeah. And also, you've done it always.

Like, in our industry, there is a lot of, like, oh, they did it like this, so let me do it like that. And I really admire you just being like, yeah, that's not who I am. Right. I'm just gonna do it like this. Like, email's your thing, you email.

Right? You don't do webinars? No. You don't do videos. Yeah.

I mean, it's

Laura Belgray: like Never say never.

Kate Northrup: Never say never. I mean, you'd be great on video. I'm sure you'd do great at all of it, but it's like you've doubled down on what you're good at and what people expect from you, and you're good at it. Now you do have these right right now, you were doing a launch of, Book Launch Hero. Yes.

Right? So which I love. And so with that one, did you do a similar thing? Did you do, like, a couple weeks of lead up? No.

You were selling something else and then people wanted it because it was a bonus. Tell me what was what was happening there.

Laura Belgray: So I knew it was coming up. It was it's like a crammed month. And but I I want like, I knew I had to offer inbox hero in January, because that's when I always launch it, and there was nowhere else to put it. And it's a moneymaker for me. And people want it.

There's a lot of demand for it.

Kate Northrup: And do you only offer it when you offer it, like, you can't just get it anytime?

Laura Belgray: Right. And I have not, you know, ever greened it because that's such a I think it's a I think it's awesome to have a working funnel, like an automation, but it requires advertising to make it work. And I don't like putting money into ads, cause I just don't have confidence in them. I always feel like,

Kate Northrup: no. It's It really can be just like driving down the street throwing money out the window

Laura Belgray: Exactly.

Kate Northrup: If it's not working. I hate that idea.

Laura Belgray: So, so it's open when it's open. And at least for now. And, and then I knew I was gonna I offered an early bird price on book launch here, which I knew I was gonna launch. So I talked about it a bit, but not a whole lot. I did these pretty much back to back, like, shut the cart for inbox hero, you know, the week before and at right after the weekend, like, shut it on Friday and then Monday, boom, book launch hero is open.

And I felt like, yeah, I could spend weeks talking about it and getting people excited, but I just wanted to just put it out there and be lazy about it. I love that.

Kate Northrup: It's so good. Okay. I have more questions.

Laura Belgray: Yeah. Keep asking.

Kate Northrup: I wanna know about

Kate Northrup: all the different okay. In Shrimp Club yeah. I love I love just, like, knowing the different ways people are doing things behind the scenes, because, again, it never has to be any which way. Right. You just get to do it the way that's right for you.

Laura Belgray: Yeah.

Kate Northrup: So in Shrimp Club, you get on and you do rapid fire q and a with your people. It's more hot seats. Hot seats.

Laura Belgray: So we do 10 minute hot seats.

Kate Northrup: And everyone gets 1 each month?

Laura Belgray: And everyone gets 1 each month. So we do 2 calls. Yeah. You live at that group. And so people go the first call.

Kate Northrup: And you're the only one doing the advising. Right. So that's great.

Laura Belgray: Yeah.

Kate Northrup: And are there is there a live event?

Laura Belgray: Yes, we have one retreat. One retreat. It's a one day retreat.

Kate Northrup: And how many people? 20. 20 people. And it's 6 month program. It's 8 months.

Laura Belgray: start yes. It started as 6 months, and I was like, people are just getting going at the 6 month mark, so I made it 9 months. And then I was like, people are losing their momentum in the 9th month.

Kate Northrup: Month. Okay, so 8 months. I love that. See, do you trial and error? And is there like a specific criteria that you have to have to join Shrimp Club?

Laura Belgray: No, not really. You have to be a cool person. And So you apply? Yeah, yeah, there's an application.

Kate Northrup: Okay.

Laura Belgray: And I put the price in there.

Kate Northrup: Yes, correct. Because I don't wanna do that whole thing of like, you've been invited to have a call with me and then I'll tell you the price on the call. I don't like any of that. Right. So, yeah.

So, they I ask them if they're, you know, ready, willing and able to pay the price. And, and the people who say yes are in one pull. The people who say no, once in a while, if I'm like, this person is amazing. I really want them in. You know, maybe there's a scholarship.

Yeah. We'll figure it out. Or is there a way that it could be doable for you? Yeah. But, yeah.

So they apply and it's a whole range of experience and businesses. It's not all copywriters. It's people with all different kinds of businesses. If someone's like, I don't have a business or a business idea, Can you help me figure out what I wanna do in life? They're probably not a fit because they're not gonna add that much to other people.

But people who are beginners, I think do add a bring a lot to the table.

Kate Northrup: I think they do too. Yeah. Yeah, no, sometimes I've gotten the best insight or the best feedback from folks who are new in business, and I've been at it for a long time. And I'm like, oh, I forgot to look at things that way or, like, you know, whatever. Because we don't know what we don't know, so we ask good questions Right.

Often. Right. Okay. That's great. And then with Book Launch Hero, is it like a PDF, or is it prerecorded, or is it live?

Laura Belgray: It's gonna be a live double workshop Okay. Like, 2 days in a row. And I am walking through every like, I've got slides. I'm still working on them. It's a lot.

I'm walking through everything that I did to promote To watch the podcast. To launch this book. And it's not necessarily your blueprint. Like what worked for me might not work for you. Totally.

Pick and choose. It's a buffet. But you're saying this is what I did.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. And you did do a lot of things.

Laura Belgray: I did a lot.

Kate Northrup: Yeah. Like, do you have any now you're about 6 months out, 7 months out from from the publishing date. What was really surprising to you about the book launch process, that you didn't expect? Yeah. Which is Well what's surprising me in this. Yeah. Oh, yeah. That is the definition that surprised.

Kate Northrup: To help you

Kate Northrup: with that one.

Laura Belgray: There were some surprises I was I was expecting, waiting for. But sometimes you are like the surprise that it is totally up to you, up to the author to sell your book, to do everything, and nobody you would expect to help, really helps. I've been told that.

Kate Northrup: Yeah.

Laura Belgray: And I I kind of expected to be surprised by how helpful they were, like, oh, because they seemed it, like, on calls that we had. Like, oh, we're gonna get you this and we're gonna get you that and zilch. I did just about everything. And there was some help, like, good merch and mailings and some people had but in general, it's like, yep. Everyone's right.

It's all on you. And so, but one thing that did surprise me, because I thought, like, all these titles, there's so many titles with fuck in the title Yeah. Or the subtitle. Those are great. All you need is an asterisk.

And those are in Target, and they're put you know, and they're advertised, whatever. But having the word titties, so, like, I was supposed to have a billboard in Times Square and spent money making someone was gifting it to me. And I spent all this money, not a ton of money, but still significant chunk, getting a video made, and, they rejected it, the billboard committee. You can have actual titties all over

Kate Northrup: Times Square. You just can't say the word. Titties with

Laura Belgray: nothing more than some tassels on them or like yeah. Or those things they put on you at the mammogram. Like, those. What is that? Those little metal things.

I don't know what that is.

Kate Northrup: Oh, weird. I've never had a mammogram. What? That's a whole other conversation.

Kate Northrup: We'll keep that. I like an electrics.

Kate Northrup: No. No. No. I no. I do I do breast health scanning

Laura Belgray: just Good. Good.

Kate Northrup: In a different way Good. Good. With thermograms. Okay. Just don't send me a DM Yeah.

Laura Belgray: Don't send me a DM About my breast. About her titties.

Kate Northrup: I'm on it.

Laura Belgray: Yeah. She's on it. She's on the titty front. So, yeah, you can have titties everywhere, all over Times Square, but you can't say the word titties. And so it was rejected.

And then we tried a version with an asterisk and we tried the version with it blurred out. They rejected both. And so and, Amazon rejected the ads that the publisher was supposed to run.

Kate Northrup: And Who knew? That was so edgy.

Laura Belgray: Who knew?

Kate Northrup: Can you say why the title? Because it's so funny. Say why? Yeah, like, your story about the tough titties.

Laura Belgray: Oh, why the title Oh, why I named it tough titties. Yeah, sure. Tough titties.

Kate Northrup: I mean, A, it's just funny, but there's a reason. Yeah. I mean, it's funny.

Laura Belgray: I didn't know what my book was gonna be. I was writing all these stories and like what connected them. They were all like New York kinda New York growing up, coming of age stories and stories of being a dork. My, like, working title that I knew it wasn't And then and then one day I found myself saying something that I say all the time. And usually in response to like so and so things you should do it this way or so and so, But somebody wants that I'm not down for.

I was like, yeah, tough titties. I was like, that's the title. I'm like, it it just smacks of, like, eighties, New York coming of age, wearing a terry cloth halter top, you know, streets scented with urine. I felt like it it speaks to all of that. And then also there's the other meaning of, well, there's just titties.

I I have them. You have them. And they're a whole thing.

Kate Northrup: They're a whole thing. I'm not gonna give away the, like, the story that's in your book about your titties, but it's kind of remarkable, actually. Like, it's funny, but it's also kind of like, woah, wild about what the body will do. So I'm

Kate Northrup: gonna leave that to people who get

Kate Northrup: the book because it's it's great.

Laura Belgray: Thank you. Yeah. There's a titular chapter.

Kate Northrup: There is. I mean, there's many, really. But titular, yes. Titular. That was good.

Okay. Mhmm. Ching. Okay. Laura, I think you're great.

Thank you for being here. Thanks for being my friend. Thanks for making me laugh for over a decade. Thank you. You just enjoyed it.

Laura Belgray: For a queef.

Kate Northrup: Queef. Our queef love story. Yes. So if people want Sorry. Queef a love story. Okay. Go on.

Kate Northrup: That'll be my next book. Or maybe yours. Or maybe mom

Laura Belgray: maybe enjoy a collab.

Kate Northrup: So if people wanna get the book, connect with you, where should they go?

Laura Belgray: Okay. Get the book at toughittiesbook.com. I I have a great bonus over there. So if you all the booksellers are there, so if you go there, and fill in the form, you'll get the bonus. So don't go to toughitties.com.

I can't tell you what you're gonna find there. Toughittiesbook.com. And then my digital home is talkingshrimp.com. You'll also find the book there. And then my main social platform, which I try not to go on too much as we discussed, is Instagram.

So I'm at Laura Belgray.

Kate Northrup: Amazing.

Laura Belgray: Go over on Instagram.

Kate Northrup: And as I mentioned, get on Laura's email list. It will make you a better writer. It will make you laugh. And those are two reasons enough.

Laura Belgray: Thank you.

Kate Northrup: Thank you for being here.

Laura Belgray: Thank you for having me.

Kate Northrup: It's so fun.

Laura Belgray: So much fun.

Kate Northrup: Thank you so much for listening to this episode of Plenty. I hope you laughed as much as I did. Of course, go get yourself a copy of Tough Titties. You will read it in a weekend. It is so funny.

It is, like, it's enriching, and it's honestly really permissive. I know Laurie didn't write it with the intention of, like, passing along steps or anything like that, but as I mentioned many many helpful takeaways that will help you live your best life even if you are the worst. If you liked this episode, please text it to a friend. Tell them this lady is so funny. You gotta go listen to her.

Rate the podcast. Leave us a review. Subscribe, and I will see you for the next episode of Plenty.

Kate Northrup: Woo hoo. You made it to the end of an episode of plenty. Don't you feel expanded already? So if you liked this episode, go ahead and leave us a review. Subscribe to the podcast.

Text a friend and let them know they need to listen in. That helps us spread the word so more people can experience plenty together. And if you wanna ease your path to creating wealth, I created a money breakthrough guide for you where I interviewed over 20 of my high earning women friends, and I asked them what their biggest money breakthrough guide was. And the responses were so mind blowing and helpful, I knew I needed to pass them along to you. This is the kind of thing that is often only shared behind closed doors, but now you can access it totally for free.

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