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THE MAGNETISM OF

MEL ROBBINS

FOLLOWING HER
METEORIC RISE TO
PODCAST FAME,
MEL ROBBINS
REVEALS HER
NEWFOUND SECRET
TO SUCCESS WITH
THE LET THEM THEORY.

“

THERE IS NOTHING THAT IS SPECIAL OR LUCKY OR DIFFERENT BETWEEN ME AND SOMEBODY WHO PICKS UP THIS MAGAZINE,”

MEL ROBBINS INSISTS REPEATEDLY DURING OUR INTERVIEW.

It's a humble assessment that her longtime listeners and social media followers will recognize. The self-deprecating podcast host, author and motivational speaker wears her typicality on her sleeve and even flaunts her biggest failures as launchpads for her most-listened-to and hard-earned words of advice.

Among them is a particularly painful period that occurred 15 years ago. That's when she found herself, at age 41, unable to get out of bed in the morning. She'd been laid off from her job. She was drinking too much. Her husband's restaurant business was failing, and their family of five was suffocating under a mountain of debt—to the tune of \$800,000. There were weeks during which she could not find a way to pay for groceries or gas.

Robbins was desperate to get back on course, but she kept finding herself doing the opposite: nothing. The motivation just would not surface. That is, until she tried a little trick. She imagined she was a rocket preparing for launch, and she silently counted down: 5-4-3-2-1. With this simple practice, she noticed she was able to get out of bed before her brain could protest. “It felt like a small victory, but it was also a revelation,” she recalls in her latest book. “If I could push through those five seconds of fear, maybe I could push through anything.”

The discovery was straightforward but effective: She had five seconds to act on any given thought before her mind could shut down the idea. She started using the countdown for everything she had been avoiding: getting up on time, confronting her overdrinking, finding a new job, opening a stack of long-ignored bills and making a plan to get out of debt.

It became the first of Robbins' many viral ideas when she shared it on stage at a 2011 San Francisco TEDx presentation. She remembers the talk as a 21-minute “panic attack” in front of 700 people, but to anyone watching from the outside, it's anything but. Robbins' singular ability to captivate an

audience with a simple but powerful concept is displayed in full glory—as is her sense of humor, her down-to-earth demeanor and a dash of crassness (the speech was titled “How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over”). A video of the talk made its way online shortly after the live event and has since been viewed more than 33 million times.

The success of Robbins' TED Talk propelled her into a side gig as a speaker at conferences and business events. Within three years, she was giving nearly 100 speeches a year and became the most-booked female speaker in the world. Sharing her advice was no longer a side gig, and the power of Robbins' countdown technique—what she came to call “The 5 Second Rule”—only gained traction. A book of the same title was published in 2017 and has sold millions of copies; its recording became the No. 1 selling self-published audiobook of all time.

Since then, Robbins has built a formidable media enterprise around her ideas, research and conversations with experts. She founded 143 Studios, which now employs 30 team members. Many are middle-aged women—a source of pride for Robbins who is herself 56.

The bedrock of the business is *The Mel Robbins Podcast*, which launched in 2022 and almost instantly shot to the top of the charts. Listeners have downloaded or streamed it over 200 million times, devouring Robbins' personal takes on motivation, productivity, wellness and mindset change, alongside her interviews with experts in health, psychology, habits and relationships. It routinely ranks within the top 15 podcasts in the U.S. and is the No. 1 podcast in Apple Podcasts' education category.

Several of her books, including *The 5 Second Rule*, *The High 5 Habit* and her latest, *The Let Them Theory*, are bestsellers, and her audio books and programs regularly rocket to the top of Audible's charts.



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4 THINGS MEL ROBBINS WANTS YOU TO KNOW

ROBBINS HAS A MESSAGE FOR YOU: “IF YOU’RE READING *SUCCESS*, YOU ACTUALLY HAVE BIG GOALS AND YOU WANT TO DO BIG THINGS.” HERE ARE FOUR TIPS TO SET YOU IN MOTION.

1. LET THEM

“The more that you let other people live their lives, the better your life gets, and the more that you let other people be who they are, the better your relationships are going to be.”

2. FLIP THE SCRIPT

“One of the biggest opportunities in your life, honestly, is to learn how to flip chronic comparison into a form of inspiration.... Let [other people] inspire you, let them teach you, let them show you the way and let them show you the formula.”

3. FOLLOW THE FORMULA

“Every business has a formula. Follow it.... You will make it unique because you will be putting yourself into the formula. Do not reinvent the wheel. Follow the formula, and use it to your advantage.”

4. GET ‘UNSTUCK’ IN 5 SECONDS

“Focus on getting out of bed in the morning and just starting the day. Simply saying that I’m going to wake up every day and get out of bed, and I’m going to do one thing that I’ve been avoiding—and that could be [taking] a 10-minute walk, it could be journaling, it could be meditating—as an act of defiance. Use The 5 Second Rule (5, 4, 3, 2, 1—go) and it’ll take you about a week, and you’ll feel completely different because you’ll be moving in a new direction.”

THE MEL ROBBINS PODCAST

“I REALLY JUST LOVE DEEPER CONVERSATIONS,
AND I THINK WE’RE ALL LARGELY GOING THROUGH
THE SAME THINGS, AND WE CAN LEARN FROM IT.”



‘A FISH IN WATER’

It’s no surprise Robbins does particularly well in the audio space. When she talks, people listen. She has the voice of a wise, funny, straight-shooting Midwestern aunt who drops a new truth bomb seemingly in every sentence and is endlessly quotable. She packages her advice in relatable, often minorly embarrassing tales from her own life. And in videos on Instagram and YouTube, Robbins looks straight into the camera from behind her trademark thick-rimmed glasses, the corners of her eyes crinkling with the occasional wry smile, as she offers powerful, commanding insights meant to snap listeners out of whatever funk they may find themselves in that day.

Hers is an endearingly approachable media presence that manages at the same time to be highly polished and authoritative, thanks to her previous careers as a

radio talk show host and an on-air CNN legal analyst. But life shaped her communication style in less glamorous ways, too. Robbins has been open about her adult diagnoses of ADHD and dyslexia, conditions that impacted her from an early age. Surviving the latter as a student, she believes, is what propelled her to become an exceptional verbal communicator.

“If you can freestyle and talk, you can kind of distract people from the fact that you don’t quite understand the passage in the book,” she says. “Being the first to talk, being charming, being able to read social cues, being courageous and just kind of going first—it became a life skill.”

Indeed, Robbins did well in school and went on to earn a

history degree from Dartmouth College and a law degree from Boston College. The path wasn’t without its challenges. “I was horrible at law school,” she says. But in her program’s third year, the students began mock trial exercises that relied heavily on verbal arguments, and she remembers the distinct joy of finally feeling like “a fish in water.”

After graduation, she worked as a public defender, where she noticed that deliberating juries tended to only remember a few standout phrases from the trial arguments. To win a case, she realized, “You’ve got to be able to distill it down into something super simple that somebody can remember... and that’s the heart of what I do.”



“LET THEM, LET THEM, BECAUSE YOU HAVE SUCH A HUGE, AMAZING LIFE TO LIVE, AND YOU NEED TO TAKE ALL THE POWER BACK THAT YOU’VE BEEN GIVING TO OTHER PEOPLE.... USE THAT TIME AND ENERGY ON YOUR DREAMS, YOUR HAPPINESS AND THE VISION THAT YOU HAVE FOR YOUR LIFE.”

BUILDING A GLOBAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Robbins and her team have taken her podcast well beyond productivity pep talk territory—in part by bringing on experts for conversations on health and wellness that have resulted in a reshaping of the cultural lexicon on some topics. Her episode with guest Dr. Mary Claire Haver, an OB-GYN and menopause expert, for example, became the podcast’s most-listened-to episode of all time and has spurred countless new discussions between women and their doctors about medical treatment for perimenopause symptoms. Episodes tackling anxiety are also ranked in her top five, including one with Dr. Russell Kennedy, known as “The Anxiety MD.”

The podcast’s success has led to a landmark three-year agreement with SiriusXM, which secures 143 Studios’ revenue stream well beyond the typical 60-day ad sales cycle. The deal, alongside her books, audiobooks, courses and speaking engagements, puts the company among big players in global media. “And I’m just crazy proud of the fact that a bunch of, largely, women in their early 40s and 50s are the ones running it,” she says.

Stepping into the shoes of leader and entrepreneur is something Robbins learned from her mother, Marcia Schneeberger. “She just had this moxie,” Robbins says. “I just saw this woman [who] would decide what she wanted to do, and then she would just go do it.”

She recalls the time her mother and a friend sought a bank loan to open a gourmet kitchen store in the 1980s in Muskegon, Michigan. The bank, impressed with the business plan, agreed to give the two women a loan—but only if their husbands would cosign. Her mother, who was joint account holder with Robbins’ father on several personal accounts at the bank, “stood up and marched right over to the teller and promptly started to close all their accounts.” After that, Robbins chuckles, “Well, they were more than happy to give her a loan very quickly.”

LIVING LIFE AS AN OPEN BOOK

Online, viewers get a peek into Robbins’ own marriage and family life, say, in a video of the couple camping out in their backyard or in a podcast interview with her son Oakley about his anxiety. She embraces the social media influencer model of self-promotion, appearing on social media daily—often several times a day—with a word of advice or simply a momentary thought she wants to share. Sometimes, the recordings take place along hiking trails near her home in Southern Vermont or in her office or studio, while others are filmed while she’s getting in the car to head to yoga class.

When asked about her willingness to share so much of her life online, she says, while she has no intention of turning her life into a reality show, “I really just love deeper conversations, and I think we’re all largely going through the same things, and we can learn from it.”

One such personal revelation came last year on the day of her son’s high school prom. He hadn’t made dinner reservations, bought a corsage or prepared for the weather (a rainstorm was headed their way). Robbins describes how she repeatedly tried to intervene to help her son while he, as teenagers do, resisted any assistance. One of her daughters happened to be home visiting and watched the scene go down with scorn, imploring, “Mom, *let them*.... It’s their prom. Not yours.”

She took the plea to heart and began repeating the refrain “let them” to herself. Within a week, it became a mantra that she says allowed her to rise above the annoyances, inconveniences and outright offenses of daily life and relationships. She felt the white-knuckled grip she had held on so much of her life start to loosen.

Robbins shared the revelation on her social media channels, and the posts blew up immediately. When she started receiving pictures of fans’ tattoos featuring the phrase “let them,” she knew she was onto something big.

In December 2024, she published *The Let Them Theory*, a highly anticipated release that details how the practice works in daily life and in a variety of relationship scenarios.

Important to the theory is an equal measure of personal responsibility, captured in the accompanying phrase, “let me.” She explains in the book, “When you say *Let Them*, you make a conscious decision not to allow other people’s behavior to bother you. When you say *Let Me*, you take responsibility for what *you* do next. What I love about *Let Me* is that it immediately shows you what you can control. And there’s so much you can control. Your attitude. Your behavior. Your values, your needs, your desires and what *you* want to do in response to what just happened.”

The theory is one of huge personal growth for Robbins, whose work has largely focused on individual motivation and self-empowerment, and takes her advice into a broader realm of relationships and community.

“This will be my legacy,” Robbins says. “[We’ve] all missed this hidden first step to personal growth and change.... Before you can take control of your own life, you must first stop trying to control everybody else’s.”

It also acts as an antidote of sorts to the tendency many of us have to compare our lives to others in a modern life narrated by social media feeds and slick marketing imagery.

“The power is in learning how to let people have negative opinions, because that’s what you’re afraid of. That’s why you’re managing everything. Because you’re trying to make sure nobody has a negative opinion about you. Well, what if you just did the opposite? What if you just let them have a negative opinion, and you then focused on saying, ‘Let me make decisions that make me proud of myself.’”

A renewed passion rises in Robbins’ voice when she talks about the *Let Them Theory* and its possibilities. “Let them, let them,” she insists, “because you have such a huge, amazing life to live, and you need to take all the power back that you’ve been giving to other people.... Use that time and energy on your dreams, your happiness and the vision that you have for your life.”

Is letting go of worrying what others think a natural next step for a 56-year-old woman who has dug herself out of debt, successfully raised three children, nurtured a marriage of 28 years, launched a thriving media empire and made her way into the earbuds of millions of Americans? Perhaps. But it’s a wisdom we could all stand to hear. ♦

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