

CHOOSE TO GROW: Cathy Salit with Stephanie Breedlove

This installment of “Choose to Grow” features **Stephanie Breedlove**.

Stephanie is the co-founder of Care.com HomePay, and the author of [All In: How Women Entrepreneurs Can Think Bigger, Build Sustainable Businesses, and Change the World](#). A thought leader who helps entrepreneurs learn how to build businesses with economic impact and sustained value, Stephanie has been walking the walk of a successful entrepreneur for over 20 years, building an integrated life of family and high-growth business. Learn more at www.stephaniebreedlove.com.

I asked Stephanie to tell me about a time in her life when she made a major change, and how she went about it. She shared the following story:

Professional growth requires a commitment to self-awareness. We don't like to look in the mirror when things aren't going well, but facing our weaknesses allows us to work on them and to choose our paths wisely. This is painful, yet the process of alleviating the pain brings both great rewards and understanding of the necessity of the pain.

Here's one of my most vivid memories of the painful process of actively choosing to grow my career: I took the leap into entrepreneurship as a lone full-time founder working to scale a company nationally. After 2.5 years, my small business began to turn a profit, and the hard work to execute quality marketing and sales strategies was delivering strong growth. How euphoric it was to eliminate the possibility of failure, to be able to contribute financially to my family, and to know the marketplace desired our services. Happy day. I thought the pain was over, and I was turning the corner onto

easy street.

I couldn't have been more wrong. In a small business, being a jill-of-all-trades works, and it is actually confidence-building. Growth brought the potential for large scale, possibly to 100 times the current size. I could realistically see it down the road, and I could also painfully see that I didn't have all that was needed to take it there. I was holding the business back. Was I incompetent? Was I not cut out for entrepreneurship? Did I lack the ability to grow with the business? Would I be settling for less if I kept it small and within the scope of my skills?

These were the wrong questions, and they created unbearable pain. I had to turn on the light and look in the mirror. And when I engaged in this self-awareness, I had an epiphany: No one is an expert at everything. I was asking the wrong questions and killing my confidence in the process. I wasn't inadequate. The business simply needed more rock star power, and in areas that were not my forté. The business needed the strategic power of many, and I needed to quit trying to carry the weight of the world on my shoulders. I realized that I needed a co-founder to double the executive strength for the business to achieve all it was capable of. It was the answer. No pain, no gain.

Thank you, Stephanie, for your story — I feel close to it on many levels. I especially appreciate the opportunity it gives us to expose success via “rugged individualism” as the scientifically unsound (not to mention macho) illusion that it is. It is very tempting to believe that if you are tough enough, smart enough, and have enough grit (the most recent paean to this notion), you will prevail.

But none of us are Robinson Crusoe living on an island by ourselves. Human beings are social. We are always part of a network/community/web that is

responsible for creating everything and anything that sees the light of day in our world. Not only do we need “rock stars,” we need roadies, and stage and sound managers, and fans, and so much more.

And Stephanie is definitely a rock star in my world. I am inspired by her willingness to share the pain and uncertainty of her journey because I know she is not alone in feeling like a failure for trying to do the impossible. Stephanie is right. We all have the strengths and weaknesses we have. So how do you expand your repertoire? By radically *accepting* who you are as part of working with others to go *beyond* who you are and grow. I often advise people to form a Performance Board of Directors whose job it is to help you perform new ways of taking on life and work challenges, whatever they may be. But however you choose to do it, remember: when you get off that island, there's a lot more room for growing!



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