

# Redefining Health & Wellness

## #65

**Featured this episode:** Shohreh Davoodi & Kara Perez

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**Shohreh Davoodi:** Hey y'all, welcome to episode number 65 of the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. Today I am chatting with Kara Perez, the founder of Bravely Go. Bravely is a feminist financial education company focused on making finances actionable, intersectional, and accessible. Kara and I talked about values-based spending versus mindless spending, financial self-care, the value of financial transparency with loved ones, and so much more. To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to [shohrehdavoodi.com/65](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/65). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/65](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/65).

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Lastly, even if you're unable to support the podcast financially, you can always subscribe, rate, review, and share it so that more people can find and benefit from the show. However you choose to invest in the podcast, thank you for believing in me and tuning in each week.

[Music plays]

Welcome to the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. I'm your host and resident rainbow glitter bomb, Shohreh Davoodi. I started this project because I saw how black-and-white messaging about health harms everyone, and I wanted to paint a more honest and vibrant picture. This podcast is a space where we can reimagine health together by confronting

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limiting misconceptions, delving into aspects of well-being that are often ignored, and prioritizing conversations with marginalized individuals. I encourage you to take what you need and leave behind what you don't. Are you ready for this? Let's fucking go!

It is so great to have you here, Kara. I know how in demand your time is, so it means a lot to me that you're making time for this conversation today.

**Kara Perez:** I'm so jazzed to be here.

**Shohreh:** Yeah. So, for the folx who don't know you, you are a financial expert and you are the founder of Bravely. Tell me more about how your business got started and specifically how you help people with money.

**Kara:** Yeah, so I'll give you kind of the breakdown of the business first. I started the business in 2017, and what we do is feminist financial education. Which, I know the word "feminist" can scare a lot of people, so I just want everyone to back it up [laughs] and understand that what I mean by feminist is that we're gonna talk about things like how race, and gender, and sexuality, and physical ability impact our money, because they all do. And so much of personal finance advice ignores that fact, which makes it less impactful.

If you're reading an article that refuses to acknowledge the existence of the wage gap, but you are a woman, you're a Latina making 54 cents on the dollar to a white dude, you're like, this isn't super helpful to me [laughter]. So that's what we do at Bravely. We kind of get into the gray area and the nitty-gritty of the like, ooh, there's not a clear answer to how to fix this immediately, but we need to talk about it, aspects of money. As well as the like, here's how you can start to pay down your debt, here's how you can start to invest, here's what budgeting is and how you can

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build a budget for yourself. So we're practical and tactical, and we're also existing in the gray area.

And then my journey to this point in my life [laughs], it's been such a road. So I graduated college in 2011 and had \$25,302 in student loan debt and then no job. For those of us who remember back in the day, 2011 was very much so the aftermath of the Great Recession. Technically the recession ended in 2009, but everyone knows that like, for some people the recession never ended [laughs].

**Shohreh:** Yeah.

**Kara:** A few years after 2009 there were still hiring freezes and industries outside of tech were still really struggling. And I don't have a degree in tech, so I was like, cool, cool, cool, cool, cool, what am I gonna do? And I waited tables for the first three years out of school 'cause I just could not find a "real job." And waiting tables, it's very much so real work—that's a hill I'll die on—but it's not necessarily well-paid work. At least the restaurants I was working in.

So I wasn't really making any headway on my financial life. I wasn't really paying down my debt. I was making my payments, but I wasn't getting ahead of it. I wasn't really able to save. I definitely wasn't investing. I was just kind of treading water. And then, in 2014 I had what I like to call my "quarter-life crisis" where I was like, oh my god, no one is going to come riding in on a white horse to save me, even though I live in Texas and there are literally people riding white horses [laughter].

**Shohreh:** Every day!

**Kara:** Like no one is going to get my financial life together except for me. And the number one thing that is ruining my life right now is my relationship to

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money. I was just really unhappy, I was really afraid, and I was watching all of my friends, frankly lap me. Like they were doing things like getting raises, getting promotions, getting engaged, and I was like, I'm a 26-year-old caterer who is afraid to look at her bank account. Like nothing about this is sustainable.

So I kind of fell into the world of personal finance and started reading blogs and books and just immersing myself in money talk, and then applying anything that I felt I could to my own life. And I really honed in on my debt. I just knew that I needed to get rid of that, that was the worst thing about my budget every month, was having to make that big payment, and I wasn't making very much money. In 2014 I made \$18,000, so I was just like, every penny counts [laughs]. If I can get back this \$400 a month that I'm currently spending on debt, like that can go to literally anything else.

So I became hyper frugal and started focusing on putting every single extra penny towards my debt. And I paid off my last \$18,000 in student loan debt in 10 months. And like I said, in 2014 I made \$18,000, and then in 2015 I made \$32,000. And those numbers are before tax, so my actual take home was less [laughs]. And you can go see my tax returns from those two years on my Instagram, which is @webravelygo. I like to share them because it's so easy to look at the world of finance and just think it's like people who have already come from money, they work these high-paying, six-figure corporate jobs, and I'm like, dee-dee-dee-dee-dee, it's me! [Laughter] Here I am!

In the process of paying off this debt, I was just looking around at all these resources and realizing, I'm not seeing myself reflected back. Like, there are very few women, let alone young women in their twenties. There are

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very few single people, and I had a boyfriend at the time—still have the same boyfriend—but we didn’t share money. So I was what I like to call, “financially single.” Definitely no information, or resources, or articles on low-income people. The world of personal finance likes to ignore low-income people.

**Shohreh:** Uh, yeah!

**Kara:** So I was like, damn, I’m gonna do something about this. So I started a blog, and then I was like, I really wanna host events, ‘cause I’m an extrovert. I love being around people. And so in 2017 I got the LLC and hosted my first event, and that sold out and I was like, cool, seems like people are into this. And we’ve just kind of been rocking and rolling ever since.

**Shohreh:** So, I wanna say your story about post-financial crisis finding a job really resonates with me because I graduated from college in December of 2010, so it was around that same time. And my solution was to take my music major ass to law school. So a lot of people were doing that at the time with English degrees and arts degrees. We were like, well, we can’t get a job out in the world, so I guess we’ll do something more practical? Clearly that didn’t last because I completely changed that and started my own business, but people were faced with really hard decisions at that time.

**Kara:** Yeah, it was a really heavy time in American history for a lot of people. And like, a lot of good things came out of it, but also a lot of dark things came out of it. And I think it’s okay to acknowledge, like, there are difficult periods in our own lives and in our countries’ lives, and how we deal with those things really helps shape the good times.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, that’s so true. And I know that you primarily work with women, so tell me what attracted you to helping women specifically with their money.

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**Kara:**

Well, I am a woman, and so I just was [laughs] realizing day-to-day the struggles that I was facing, and I knew that I couldn't be the only one. I knew I wasn't the only one. And also, I've long called myself a feminist, and women's issues have long been near and dear to my heart. And again, in the world of finance, men are fine. Men are doing just fine in the world of finance [laughter]. Like most of the financial experts are men. Most people who work on Wall Street are men. It's an industry dominated by dudes talking to other dudes.

And so I was like, cool, I don't need to reinvent the wheel there [laughs]. What's not really happening is people specifically talking to women in ways that women are responding to. 'Cause a lot of the bigger banks and investment companies were trying to talk to women, but in the way that like 90s television shows were talking to ladies, being like, "Ladies, do you love shoes? Are you just like obsessed with shoes? Here's how to get more shoe money." [Laughter]

And it's like, sure, shoes can be nice, but also I'm really interested in learning how to invest, or I'm really interested in trying to figure out how to pay off my debt while save for a trip to Italy at the same time, can you help me with that? And no one was really providing that information. And since I had firsthand experience with paying off student loans, with saving an emergency fund, with learning how to invest on my own, I was like cool, I can share my story with my peers and help them. And I knew I would immediately have more of an impact

And I can honestly say that my business has been hugely impactful in thousands of women's lives, 'cause they email me, and I'm like, thank you so much. [Laughs] So it was never like a conscious choice, it was just like,

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here are the people that I'm seeing who are not getting served, and I want to serve them.

**Shohreh:**

Yeah, you were very much stepping in to fill a gap in this market, and I think the reason that gap exists as well is because of historical reasons that women have not been a part of financial decisions in this country, in particular.

**Kara:**

Totally! If you look back at history, which is something I also do a lot in my company, to just say like, women have come a long way, but there's so much more to go. Like I am very lucky, knock on wood, I still have both of my grandmothers who will be 92 this year, and they were born in the 30s. They were born before women could have access to their own credit. Women could not get home loans, or credit cards, or bank loans in their own name without a male signature, like co-signer, until 1974.

In 1974 my mom was 20! You know, that's not that long ago! [Laughs] And another fun fact just to horrify and appall everyone listening, up until 1981, if you were married and a straight couple, husbands could take out a second mortgage in their wives' names without needing their wives' signature or permission. So your husband could take out hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt in your name that you were legally responsible for without you even knowing. I was born in '88. That was seven years before I was born that was totally legal!

So it's something that I think is so, we tend to think like, the way things are now are the way things have always been, 'cause that's my experience, like I wasn't around in 1933, but that's not true. So the more we know about where we've come from, the more we understand what's happening now.

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**Shohreh:** And I think this gets at something important, which is that we live in a culture that is obsessed with this kind of bootstraps narrative and self-made narrative around money, and as a result of that being the common narrative, systems of oppression, like patriarchy and like white supremacy, really tend to get swept under the rug. So when you're helping people with personal finance, which is, you know, an individual pursuit, how do you balance personal responsibility with the systemic realities that we do have as a society?

**Kara:** Yeah, this is something that I think about a lot, keeps me up at night, for sure [laughter]. The balance I try to strike in my business is we have to do both. We have to show up at the polls and we have to inform ourselves of how systems work and work to change those systems, and we have to take responsibility for paying our own bills on time.

So, for example, we know we have a student loan crisis in this country, and the reason we reached crisis levels in the first place are because of federal government decisions. But, also, as an individual, there are tools, and plans, and debt pay-off strategies that you can utilize to pay off your individual debt. Now, if you have \$300,000 in student loans, like many law students do [laughs], to shout it back to your time in law school, that's obviously going to be very different from me paying off a little over \$25,000 in debt. And the reason that I worked so hard to get out of debt was 'cause I knew, like, in the end it was 18 grand. I was like, I can see the finish line.

But on the flipside, what we need to be doing as a generation is like calling, and advocating, and saying, we need student loan forgiveness, or we need a new plan, we need more state and federal funding for colleges.

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Because that's how loans got so big, is the federal government and state governments stopped funding colleges in the same way.

So if we put more tax dollars to paying for education, we will lessen the need for people to take out student loans, meaning we'll have fewer people with student loans. And also, if you have a small enough amount of loans that it makes sense for you to pay it off, like, go nuts, use that debt avalanche, get after it.

**Shohreh:** Right, because even though of course we need to go at this from a federal level and from a systems level, like you said, it's not like we can just default on the loans and nothing bad will happen to us. Like, that responsibility still exists in the current system that we're living in to pay that, so it becomes a question of okay, what can I do to get ahead, even with the systemic issues that have got me to this place that I'm in?

**Kara:** Yeah, I think of it as like, how am I taking care of myself and others around me? So every time I call Ted Cruz's office to complain about something, I'm taking care of others around me. And every time I transfer a hundred bucks to my savings account, I'm taking care of me.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, I like that a lot, and I think this concept in general relates back to what you were talking about where standard financial advice just kind of ignores these aspects. 'Cause like you were saying, they like to pretend that low-income people don't exist. If you're someone working multiple jobs, living paycheck to paycheck, and you're stuck in the cycle of poverty, you can only cut so much. Like there may be nothing left to cut. And so, where does that leave you in this financial scheme that we're living in?

**Kara:** Yeah, totally. I mean, unfortunately, the harsh truth is, at a certain level of income, there's no advice. The only advice is to earn more money. If you

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are making \$15,000 a year and you have a household of two people, like you're already a budgeting pro. You're already stretching a dollar as far as it can go. Me telling you to skip date night, like date night's not happening. That's already out of the budget. And so that's a very different conversation.

There's no money to be made there for banks, or for experts, or for even people such as myself, so people don't talk about it. Because there's no customers there. But that doesn't mean that there aren't people who need help there.

And so what I'm seeing now, from people like myself who are this level of finance professional who are not drawn or tied to a specific institution, we're able to offer things like, hey, I'm gonna have a free webinar on negotiation, or a free webinar on debt pay-off, and we're just gonna talk like best practices. And so we're able to make tools more accessible, which is really exciting. But that's also, like, it's like a band-aid on a bullet wound, right? [laughs] Of like, well, you know what also would be helpful is if we raised the federal minimum wage, which hasn't been raised since 2009.

**Shohreh:** Ugh. It's terrible! I just saw something the other day on Twitter or somewhere that was talking about what the federal minimum wage should be, like if it had kept pace with all other factors, and it was way higher than it is right now.

**Kara:** Yeah, I think it's like close to \$21 is what it should be.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, and people scoff at the idea of \$15 as being terrible. It's just like, oh lord!

**Kara:** Yeah, it's wild.

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**Shohreh:** Well, I think something that relates to this too is that one of the things that you talk about is values-based spending versus mindless spending. So, I'd love to hear you talk about the difference between these two things, and then understanding that of course, values-based spending is probably gonna look different depending on who you are.

**Kara:** Yes! So your values-based spending is simply put, spending according to your values. And like you and I probably have some overlapping values, and then we probably have totally different values. Like, I'm not a foodie by any means. Like, give me a plate of Pop-Tarts, and I'm like, oh my god, gourmet! This is fantastic! [Laughter] So for me, my food budget is not very big versus someone else who is like, I want to be buying really high-quality meats, really high-quality cheeses, and I wanna spend three hours in the kitchen every night cooking up a storm. I'm like, my microwave is my best friend. [Laughter]

That's important to know about yourself. People always tell me, well what's the best way to budget? And your budget will look different from my budget, so there's not one best way. It's really more of a big picture strategy to say, I value this, this, and this, so those are the three things I wanna spend on. What I don't actually care that much about are this, that, and the other thing, so I'm gonna try and not spend on those things.

So to give a more concrete example. if you are a foodie and you need \$700 a month as a grocery budget, then that's fine, give yourself that \$700. Go nuts! But then on the flipside it's like, okay, cool, well, I'm actually gonna sell my car and take the bus to work because I only have a 15-minute commute, and I don't need to be paying \$1,200 a year in car insurance. So it's like, if this then that is values-based spending.

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**Shohreh:** Something that came up for me when you were saying that is for instance, I work from home, and I had been working from home prior to the pandemic. And so for me, having a comfortable home space and environment that makes me happy and gives me joy is really important to me because I spend the vast majority of my time in this space, and particularly in my office. Whereas people who after the pandemic will go back to an office and will no longer be working in their home, maybe that's not a place that they wanna put money or thought into like I would.

**Kara:** Totally. Exactly. That's a great example.

**Shohreh:** So then the flipside of this, of course, is the mindless spending, and I absolutely am guilty of "add to cart" syndrome to deal with life's problems. So how can we start to move away from that more mindless spending and the serotonin-inducing clicking of the online shopping to get to more values-based spending?

**Kara:** Yeah, so the first thing that you really need to do is just acknowledge what you're doing when you're doing it. So much of the mindless stuff is exactly what we're calling it—mindless. We don't even realize it. We type in "Amazon," or we type in "Madewell," or we type in "J.Crew," just to see, just to see [laughter]. You know, oh well, just to, I've got a spare few minutes, like let's just see. And that's the habit that we really need to stop. We need to stop making that the default that we are moving towards.

So if you find yourself just perusing a shopping website, just ask yourself, could I be reading a book right now? Could I be emptying the dishwasher right now? Could I be doing something else that's not this right now, that's more mindful? And that could even be like, could I be cleaning out my closet to make room for the pants that I'm looking at online, but that I know I'm gonna save for out of my next paycheck? What we're trying to do is just

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retrain your brain into seeing this as a deliberate decision as opposed to, I don't know, I just kind of blacked out for 30 minutes and something arrived at my house.

'Cause we've all also bought things, like, for sure convinced this is gonna make us happy, and then by the time it even arrives, or a week or so later, the glow has already worn off. So really asking myself, what am I doing on this page? Am I chasing an endless high? Like am I doing that? And this is not a judgmental thing. It's just an informational thing. Like, oh wow, yeah, I am. I am doing that. Or no, I'm not, I'm buying this because last week I ripped a hole in my pants and these are my only nice pants, so I do need to replace them. That might be the answer, but now you know, and that becomes values-based instead of just mindless.

**Shohreh:**

Mm. So I love this because I work with clients with food in particular, and this comes up in the food context as well where people often are eating in a mindless way for a variety of reasons, often to numb or because it feels temporarily good, but it doesn't get to the deeper thing that is going on—sometimes! Sometimes the reason that you're eating makes perfect sense and that's what you should be doing in that moment. But if we're not aware of it, there's no way to know. There's no way to develop it. And so, taking that same mindset, applying it to finances, and just saying, the more awareness that we have, the better decision we can make, that makes crystal clear sense to me.

**Kara:**

Yeah, exactly. Totally. We're talking about the same thing.

**Shohreh:**

Yeah, and it's funny 'cause I think sometimes it can be confusing for people when I have guests on the podcast to talk about money because I think in our brains we don't necessarily automatically connect health and wellness with finances. But I can say that after doing this show for more

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than a year now, it is clear to me that they can be intricately linked. And I'm wondering, in your experience working with clients, in what ways have you seen finances connect to their health and well-being?

**Kara:**

Yeah. I am often saying that money touches everything in our lives, including our health from physical, to mental, to emotional. So if you've got something in your financial life that's stressing you out, that can cause you to break out, that can cause you to overeat, it can cause you to undereat. It can keep you up at night and disrupt your sleep schedule. So, it's all tied together. It's all in the same cocktail. The way that I see it most frequently is with the level of stress and people avoiding something about their money lives that has been low-key stressing them out all the time.

And so, I'm a fan of the kind of just rip the band-aid off method. You have to face something before you can change anything about that. And so, you need to find a way to be able to log into your bank accounts and look at it safely, right? And without stress, without fear, without anger, without self-judgment, so that you can figure out a plan for what to do. Okay, I'm gonna call the bank and see if I can get this charge reversed, or I'm gonna call the credit card company and see if I can negotiate a better interest rate. And then you'll have less stress in your life and have you be overall healthier.

I think another way I see it is people really want to spend on their health and that can be anything from food to a really nice set of sheets, or a certain type of pillow, or a certain type of, I'm trying to think of like, workout gear. I'm like, those bands people use?

**Shohreh:**

Workout equipment?

**Kara:**

Yeah, like resistance bands, because they know that that is going to make them feel better and that's something they're willing to spend on.

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**Shohreh:** Yeah, and I know you also talk about the idea of financial self-care, and of course self-care is an important part of health and well-being. So what does it look like to take account of your finances when you are taking account of your own self-care?

**Kara:** Yeah, a great question, and something that will look different for everyone, of course. But in the same way that self-care can be both a bath and going for a run, self-care can be calling up that credit card company and saying, “Hey, I’m getting notices from you that I’m overdue, let’s work out a payment plan,” so that you just don’t have that interest and those fees continually piling up. You don’t have to carry around that stress every single day of oh, I know I need to do something. Facing the issue can be the act of self-care. And then similarly, saving money for something to like treat yo self—you know, I want a really nice new leather jacket or I wanna go on a trip when we can travel again—saving for that and really making sure you have all the money and not just putting it on a credit card and figuring out when you’ll pay for it later, that’s an act of self-care.

**Shohreh:** That’s such a good way to think about that, with especially these different forms of self-care because sometimes buying is self-care and sometimes choosing not to buy is self-care. So again, coming back to that awareness piece and understanding what your goals and values are can help you decide what’s the best thing to be doing with your money.

**Kara:** Exactly.

**Shohreh:** I know that you also mostly work with millennials, so I figure you are the perfect person to talk to about all of these myths about millennials that are in the media about how we’re so lazy, and we’re wasting our money on avocado toast so we’re destroying the housing market. Any thoughts you care to share on the unique situation of millennials?

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**Kara:** Oh my gosh, yes. So I'm definitely a little biased towards millennials being one myself. But millennials really were born at such an odd time economically. And it's not that other generations haven't gone through economic ups and downs. You know, Boomers experienced everything from the Vietnam War to the recession in the 70s to Black Monday in the 80s, which was wild, to the Great Recession as well. But for millennials, all of these really catastrophic events are occurring at really pivotal times [laughs] for us—

**Shohreh:** Yep!

**Kara:** —really impacting our finances. And the world has changed so drastically in the last 20 years, but even just in the last 11 years since the recession, it's been really wild what has happened. And that has largely been bad for millennials' finances. Now, of course there are rich millennials, and there are plenty of millennials thriving. But by and large, millennials are carrying more debt than their parents at their same age and are earning less, which is a recipe for disaster.

So, essentially what happened is, right when we were young adults, supposed to get our first jobs and pay off all of this student loan debt or credit card debt that young adults have, the Great Recession happened. Womp, womp, womp. And then that lasted for about six years. It had like a really long-term impact on our finances. Again, the recession itself didn't last that long, but the impact of it did. And then just as we were climbing out of that hole, corona hits and we're still figuring out exactly what the economic impact is going to be. I think the federal government has intervened in some ways, but we've already lost tens of millions of jobs in this country, and I think in 2021 we'll really feel more economic impacts in a more negative way when that federal money runs out. Like when

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evictions are allowed again, for example, the housing market will feel it in a way that it's not feeling it right now.

And so, I just say to my millennials out there, keep striving. You need to continue to practice financial self-care. Don't just say, YOLO, fuck it, it doesn't matter. It does matter. Especially if you live a long time. 80-year-old you is gonna look back and say, I really wish 30-year-old you had started investing. Like I'd like to have that money right now.

But I also say for people who pick on millennials, like, you clearly don't understand the circumstances that we're dealing with. Or you understand and you don't care, which is worse. [Laughs] It's not 'cause of avocado toast. It's not because of coffee. It's because the housing market changed, the job market changed, wages haven't gone up, and we are dealing with two unprecedented financial crises in the span, really of 12 years.

**Shohreh:**

Yeah, and like you said, those happened at pivotal moments. You know, a lot of millennials were in college, just about to go into college, or out of college when this first financial crisis happened, and then now we're all like in our thirties trying to figure out what to do with that. And we were told, you know, go to college! It's the only way to get a job. Buy a house! It's the only way to build wealth. And it's like, this advice given to us from past generations doesn't make sense under the circumstances that we find ourselves in.

**Kara:**

Exactly. It's a new world, so we need new rules. And this is a big thing I do with my company to just point out, like, old-school financial advice has no place in a new-school world. And it's something that a lot of the larger people in personal finance have not adapted to because of course, the advice that they've been giving for the last 30 years has made them

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largely millionaires and sold them many books, but it's just not helpful anymore.

And so, it's like, if you're really an expert, if you're really trying to serve people, you have to be flexible and understand, my advice needs to change in order to really help people.

**Shohreh:** So here's a piece of old-school advice that I feel like many millennials learned from previous generations, which is that we don't talk about money, right? That we shouldn't be transparent talking about salaries, talking about what we're making because money is private. What do you think about that, Kara?

**Kara:** I mean, I'm definitely the person who will ask you within like 20 minutes of meeting you, "So like how much money do you make?" [Laughter] I don't adhere to that, and I think that's very harmful. And it's been around for a long time because if you zoom out and think about who benefits if I don't talk to my coworkers about how much money we're making, it's the company. It's not me, it's not my coworker—it's the company who might be perpetuating a wage gap. Who might be paying me as a woman less than Daniel across the hall, and who might be paying Suzie, who is a Black woman down the hall, even less than me.

So I think that a lot of these rules that we live by, a really good way of thinking about them is like who benefits from me following this rule? 'Cause if it's not me, I don't know if I need to be following this rule.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, I think transparency is so important, and I've been seeing more calls for that with my friends who are entering various professions because it's true—when companies are allowed to keep everything in a black box and say, "Oh yes, it's our personal discretion how people get paid,"

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discrimination inevitably happens. And it so much harder to prove because you don't have the receipts for it.

**Kara:** Mmhmm. Exactly. And even among your friends, just knowing, oh well I know that Suzie and I make similar amounts of money, but I don't know what Josie makes. Is Josie gonna wanna go to that super fancy restaurant or am I putting her in an uncomfortable position where she might not be able to afford that \$150 dinner on a Thursday? So just knowing what people in your life are, not even just making, but where they are in terms of financial stability and financial comfort and what they wanna spend on, makes for better friendships.

**Shohreh:** Right, and this is where it's so important to do the work to dispel the shame around money because we're taught that if you don't make above a certain threshold of money, that you should be ashamed or you're not successful and I think that's one of the reasons people really hide those numbers 'cause maybe they're afraid to share.

**Kara:** Yeah, absolutely. It can be really embarrassing to say, "I make \$60,000," to a room of people who make \$200,000, you know? [Laughs] Even if you're really proud of that 60K, which I'm not trying to same 60K, but it's all relative really.

And so, you might not want to start with how much I'm earning. You don't need to jump off that cliff right away. You might want to start with something more like, hey, do you budget? Do you have a plan for your money, 'cause I don't really have a plan for my money, and I've just been thinking about that recently. And then friends will say, "Oh yeah, I use this app," or, "Oh no, it's never occurred to me either." And then you can say, "Do you wanna figure this out together?" And now it's something that

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you're doing as a team rather than pitting you against, I'm a low earner, you're a high earner, etc., etc.

**Shohreh:**

I love your posts where you talk about how you and your partner have your money dates and your budgeting dates because I think that that is an element that's missing from, not only romantic relationships, but also friendships. And I feel like money could be a lot more entertaining if people did this together.

**Kara:**

Oh my gosh, my partner and I, so we've been together six and a half years, and we're total opposites in many ways, but money is a big one. He hates talking about money, it just stresses him out. It reminds him of all his past money mistakes. And he doesn't feel like he's moving as quickly as he wants to with his money, so he's embarrassed about it. Whereas I'm like, hey, I love this. Do you wanna get into our spreadsheets? Should we look at our spreadsheets? How much money did you make today? I made \$32 today because someone bought blah blah [Laughs] And he's like, I wanna die.

It's not always been graceful for us, but I have to say that figuring out a way to talk about money, in a way that we both feel heard and it works for both of us, and to your point, that is lighthearted, it's not like a big, scary, hard topic anymore. 'Cause we've worked on it. But to say, like, this is a thing that's affecting us, here's a nice joke, here's a beer so that it's smoother for all of us. It's made our relationship, overall, so much better. And honestly, it's heightened our communication because, like, he used to have a bunch of student loans, and so I would not recommend certain activities or certain places that I knew were expensive 'cause I knew he was trying to make a larger student loan payment that month. And so that

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just immediately removed the friction around that conversation, 'cause that conversation never happened.

**Shohreh:** Mm yeah. I really do think it can be such a way to move people closer, again, whether it's romantic or whether it's friendship where you really know where each other is, and like you said, it's kind of a way of caring for one another.

**Kara:** Yeah, I really do believe that. I do think it makes you a more compassionate person.

**Shohreh:** Mm. That's awesome. Alright, we're moving towards the end here. If you could leave people listening with one actionable money move that they could make, what would that be?

**Kara:** The basic and yet most powerful money move that you can make is to simply sit down and review your income and your spending. Even if you think that you've got a total lock on this, you're like, I'm a money nerd too, Kara, I'm into this. Sitting down and just reviewing your debit card, your credit card, your cash transactions, your savings, your automatic transfers, as well as where your money is coming from, shows you so much about yourself, first and foremost. Like I never knew how many times I went to H-E-B until I started budgeting [laughter]. And can help you to see, yes, I'm on track, or no, I'm not on track, or I'm on track in this area and off track in this area.

And then you start to ask questions. How do I get on track? How do I stay on track? How do I feel about this? Am I fine with where I'm at? Like cool, great. Do I wanna change this one thing? Am I embarrassed about this? That's when you really start tugging at the thread.

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**Shohreh:** So, being able to just do that first simple step of looking your finances in the eye and seeing what's really going on there, which is really hard for a lot of people.

**Kara:** It is. It sounds so simple. It's like, Kara, tell me the secret to getting Tesla at 50% off. But it's like no, no, no [laughs], back it up. The most powerful thing for most people is to come to a good place where they can easily check their bank account and understand their spending.

**Shohreh:** Excellent advice. Alright, so for our final question, which I ask all of my guests, please tell me how you define health and wellness for yourself at this moment in your life.

**Kara:** Ooh, that's a great question. I think wellness for me right now is really centered on rest and avoiding stress. We're living in a very stressful time. There's a million things to stress out about, always. So knowing where to put my energy and when to put my energy to places and also making sure there's a lot of room for rest and turning off, is definitely a huge aspect of wellness and health for me.

Also, for me, health, in a very literal way, is more vegetables. I'm a vegetarian, but I tend to be like a potato and bread vegetarian [laughter]. A rule that I like to try and follow, that I don't always stick to very well, is two vegetables at every meal. And so like, it tends to be difficult at breakfast, but I'm trying to get better at it.

**Shohreh:** It's a guideline! You're being flexible, just like you are with your money.

**Kara:** That's right [laughter].

**Shohreh:** Well thank you so much for being here, Kara. I so appreciate the passion that you have for this work and also just the philosophy of your business

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and the way that you are taking into account these systemic issues and other things that are going on, instead of putting the blame on the individual. That's so important. So how can people find you, and how can my listeners best support you in the work that you're doing?

**Kara:** Yeah. So I am @webravelygo on Instagram and Facebook—We Bravely Go. And I'm definitely most active on Instagram. I'm hopelessly addicted. But you can also find me on Twitter, @bravelygo. And then our website is [www.bravelygo.co](http://www.bravelygo.co), and like I said earlier, it has a lot of articles. It has a lot of free tools. It has a values-based budget workbook and a couple's money workbook. So, if you're intrigued by those things, those are each 22 bucks, and they can really make a big game change in your life, I think.

And I think the best way that people can support me is if you heard this podcast and you liked it, you thought I was cool, tell a friend about who I am and what I do because the more people that we reach, the more lives we change.

**Shohreh:** Kara's Instagram is both educational and entertaining, so I will give it two thumbs up. Everyone should definitely go follow her there. I will put links to everything that you just mentioned in the show notes as well so people can easily access it.

**Kara:** Thank you so much.

**Shohreh:** Of course. Thank you for being here! This was wonderful.

**Kara:** I had a blast. This was great.

**Shohreh:** And that's our show for today! If this podcast has taught you anything or helped you in any way, I hope you'll consider supporting me in my effort to keep it going. You can join my Patreon community and receive members-

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