

## Ep #58: Success Strategies for an Authentic Life with Carrie Wilkerson



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**With Your Hosts**

**Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris**

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](http://www.DentistFreedomBlueprint.com) with Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris**

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You are listening to the *Dentist Freedom Blueprint* podcast, with David Phelps and Evan Harris. Navigating you through the uncharted waters of a turbulent economy with straight-forward advice to, transform your practice into a self-sufficient cash machine, compound your net worth assets, and multiply, multiply, multiply your passive cash flow streams.

David: Welcome back everyone, this is Dr. David Phelps from the Freedom Founders mastermind community and the *Dentist Freedom Blueprint* podcast. You're going to love my guest today. She's become a very very good friend of mine, a mentor, someone I spent quite a bit of time with in a mastermind group. She's a small town girl—that's a Texas girl—which is what I really love who is able to think beyond the city limits.

She's a bestselling author, an international speaker, an award-winning podcaster, and a sought-after radio guest. She's been featured on CNN, Fox Business News, and named by *Forbes* as a top small business influencer. She's also consulted marketing and launch teams of Dr. John Maxwell, Zig Ziglar, Google small business, on business strategies and current trends.

She speaks from the experience of a former corporate clock puncher, a high school teacher, direct sales representative, growth consultant, and a business coach. She got her big start in high school when she was bagging groceries for tips only on a military base. She now makes her living by giving tips to over 100,000 men and women as The Barefoot Executive. We'll find out more about what that's all about in just a moment.

She can help you build the business you need so you can live the life you want by connecting the dots between your

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why and your do. I love that. Please welcome, my good friend, my guest today, Carrie Wilkerson, The Barefoot Executive. Carrie, how are you doing today?

Carrie: I'm doing great, David. I'm blessed. How are you?

David: Super. So all right, where did barefoot come from? We've got to get that out of the way right away. Where did the barefoot come from?

Carrie: Well according to my daddy, I always hated shoes. He was constantly, if you can believe it, as such a daddy's girl, he was constantly smacking my toes and telling me to get my bare feet off the kitchen table at supper. I just never liked being confined. I was out on the Texas pavement barefooted. I just, I didn't like it. When I taught, I didn't like wearing shoes. So when I worked at home I decided these women and all their CEO positions can keep their fancy high heels. I'll just be a barefoot CEO and do what I want on my terms.

David: I love that, I love that. Carrie, you and I got to know each other real well a few years back when I was a part of your mastermind group and we made friends. I've always admired you from a lot of different standpoints. That's why I wanted you on the call today because to me, you bring a lot of things to the table to people that you help. Again, it's men, women, business owners, professional practice owners, it doesn't matter because you've been able, in my opinion, to balance and figure out so many things. But not without challenges.

That's the thing I love about you because you're very authentic. You don't come to the stage or from your book or from a position of, "Look at me, how great I am." You're very authentic about, "Look, I've had to work through

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challenges myself. Here's what I figured out." That's what we'll talk about on the call. But do you want to take us back a little bit and talk a little bit about anything about your family or what you've gone through and some of the things that you've learned as you've gone through the normal challenges and adversities that we all face in life?

Carrie: Yeah. I like to say that I'm super qualified to help you because of what a hot mess I am and I've been. You know, I've been there, done that, untangled myself, dug myself out, had to learn some hard lessons two and three times. I actually have lost now, as of today, about 130 pounds since my overall heaviest. So even quite a bit since I saw you last. I have gotten out of six figures worth of unsecured debt more than one time. Talk about a slow learner, more than one time.

I'm the mom of four kids, two adopted and two by birth. I've dealt with infertility and depression and have had some business ideas work and some business ideas not work, which most of us that are successful have that same story. You know, just done that. Moved thirteen or fourteen times in adulthood, you know, neighborhoods, or flipped houses, or invested, or just been strategic. So I guess not necessarily the most stable either. But, I've been there and done that with all of it.

I was a job hopper and I always kind of, even though I was very good at what I did in every job that I had. I just had kind of a restlessness, kind of a wondering. Come to find out, that's an entrepreneurial spirit, right? That's how we do a little bit until we figure out our thing. But that about sums it up. I have ADHD so I deal with extreme attention and focus issues. And still very actively parenting four kids.

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One of my children has brain damage. As you know, my oldest son will always have a dependence on us. He's 20 years old but I call him my Peter Pan because he's a boy that will never grow up. Then I have three daughters that challenge me in so many ways because of their skills and talents and intellect and the stages of life. So that about sums me up. That's about more than probably everybody wants to know.

David:

That's what makes you so authentic because you're willing to talk about the things that many times people want to push aside or act like it's all good and they never deal with problems. We all do. One of the things that I like, I've watched you, Carrie, and I've seen you over the years, always structure your business. You know, your entrepreneurial spirit that drives you but you've always made sure that you structure that the best you can around the most important things in your life. And that's your faith and your family.

You just mentioned your four wonderful kids and I know your wonderful husband and your parents and the culture of family you come from. But that's the hard thing for so many people to do because I think as drivers, as entrepreneurs, we have this idea of what success is, right? Society kind of defines it for us, or maybe our profession or our industry defines what success is. So we start trying to chase this rabbit of success and it never really fits or feels good. Can you talk a little bit about that? Because I know you've dealt with it and you help so many other people that also deal with the same struggle.

Carrie:

Yeah, you know, I think I probably should write a book called success is in the eye of the beholder because I think that it's different for everybody. I think that what

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success looks like for you is very different than what it looks like for me and very different than what it looks like for several of our friends. I think there's not a number attached to it. There's not a vocation attached to it. There's not even necessarily—I know you talk a lot about freedom, I think there's not even necessarily, I think freedom doesn't mean the same thing to everybody.

David: Right.

Carrie: And I'm not a mom, I don't want anybody to mishear this and say, "Oh, she builds her entire life, it revolves around her children." That's not always the case. They are a top priority for me but I'm also not like sitting on the floor doing puzzles with them all the time when I need to be working. Part of my priority is teaching them to be independent and teaching them to respect boundaries, and teaching them what business looks like. So sometimes that means doing their own thing while I'm doing my thing.

So you're right, I'm very active with my parents. I have three local brothers and I'm very involved with them. We do have a very cool family culture. But I'll be honest, it's because of me. It's because I'm the one. I'm the glue. I'm the one that makes all that happen and really pushes all that to happen. I've been married 24 years and being married to a woman like me is not an easy thing. Being married to a strong business owner, male or female, is not an easy thing. We're not all wired the same. And when you're married to somebody who is not entrepreneurial or a risk taker, that's a very challenging thing.

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So it's a lot of things to juggle but you can respect your priorities and still build a really great business and life. It's not always easy. It's not always balanced. But it can be successful. You just have to decide what success looks like for you.

David: Carrie, what's been the best way for you to deal with—again, I think you said ADHD, a lack of ability to sometimes focus. I think a lot of entrepreneurs deal with that. I know I do as well. How do you work to overcome that challenge, which is a constant. It's a constant. You do get so much done, I know you do. But that's a challenge for so many people. So how do you make that happen and the way your brain works?

Carrie: Yeah, so you have to harness it instead of fight it. You can't curse it. You have to bless it. Honestly, it's one of our best superpowers if you handle it well. I think you need to be self-aware of your body and your energy and you need to know when you work best, when you focus best, how you fuel yourself best. I don't mean to sound like the old person advocating nutrition and hydration and stuff but it is what it is and it works.

I take a vitamin supplement that's just over the counter but it has a B vitamin in it because, while for a lot of people that seems like a stimulant, for those of us that have ADHD, a stimulant actually helps rein you in a little bit. I start every day with a cup of coffee because for the same reason, I don't take it for a stimulant to get me going. I get it to help rein my brain in a little bit.

I use an essential oil that's called InTune, I-N-T-U-N-E, that my kids call it my focus oil. They can tell when they smell it on me, "Oh, mom's got her focus on." Now they



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want to have it before they go to school too. It just kind of helps you be a little more present, a little more focused. I know not to try to work in big, huge chunks but break up my work, 30 to 45 minutes.

Not going to lie, sunshine is a huge key for me. When the weather gets grey, when the skies get grey, it affects me very deeply so I have an extra lamp at my desk that shines right in my face. I take extra vitamin D to counteract some of what happens because those of us with ADHD tend to have extreme highs and extreme lows. So you add an entrepreneurial life to that and holy smokes, we can just downright be cliff jumpers.

So, there are some things like that. I've learned not to eat a lot of carbs because of how it affects my energy. It crashes me. You know, just those kinds of things, David. I think it's just necessary that we be super self-aware. I do not medicate on purpose. I tried before and I felt very outside of myself. I just didn't feel like myself and I really thought, "I think I can treat this naturally and harness it instead of blaming things on it."

So it also means I constantly have a recording device or a notepad with me for when my brain runs away with me. You know that happens with us. But also, it comes down to knowing that you work on what fits into your primary motives at the time. So yes, I have a lot of ideas and they're all in notebooks. If they don't fit into my primary motives for what is moving me forward, towards my goals right now. I either honor that idea by giving it away to someone else—I'm very generous with ideas—or I wake up, get conscious, and realize maybe that wasn't such a good idea after all and I just scratch it off. Or I calendar it.



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I'll say, "You know what? I'm not even going to think about this until quarter three or quarter four, after I really focus on those two or three core things that are going to move me forward in what I'm doing." So with the ADHD brain, or the entrepreneurial brain, or even just if you're distracted and undisciplined, by focusing on two or three things that are your core drivers and giving yourself permission to wait on the other things, you can respect all of it. You can respect your priorities. You can focus on what needs to be focused on. And you can honor those amazing things that pop into your brain.

When we ignore the things that pop into our brain, I believe your brain becomes trained to quit producing them. You've met those people that haven't had an original idea in 20 years. It's because somebody told them, "Be practical. Be practical. Oh, that's just silly. Oh, that's not for people like us. Oh, don't, don't, don't." Well they've trained themselves not to think of new things.

So in order for us to keep producing and keep the healthiest brain, I think we need to honor those things. Write them down. Give them away. Cross them off or take action on it, but later. Give yourself permission to think on it later.

David: Great tips. Carrie, I think a lot of people have dreams or a vision of what they want their future, their life, to look like when they're younger and they're going through school or getting their career on track or starting that first business or professional practice. They have all the vigor. Then a few years down the road, it just seems like life takes over and as you said, people can get into kind of a funk. Or they might go through periods of depression.

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What are some of the ways that you found through your own pathway and through other people that you've helped and other people that you know have overcome that? Because there's so much we have in life about self-reliance, you know, "Be strong. You're strong enough, you're good enough, figure it out yourself." And there's almost too much of that sometimes. How do you deal with that?

Carrie: Yeah, a couple of things. You know, I'm a big believer about surrounding yourself with like-minded people. So people who are part of your group or part of my group or just part of a coffee group or even a group of folks from their church. If you're around people, the Bible says "iron sharpens iron, so should we be." You need to be around people that can celebrate you but can also challenge you, but people that get you.

If you're constantly around people, and I'm not going to say like maybe family reunions or holidays, but this happens. If you're around people that don't get you or don't understand you or have chosen a radically different path than you, then it's the hermit crabs coming out of the bucket, right? They're all pulling each other down and we quit that dreaming.

So you have to have at least a handful of people in your life that get you, that celebrate you, that understand you, and that are cheering for you unequivocally. But that also call you on your mess. I mean, that's just important. The other thing is the reason I think people numb themselves to their dream or give up on their goals is because they're not celebrating incrementally.

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So let's use a weight loss example. If I had not allowed myself to celebrate until I hit 130 pounds lost, I would have given up a really long time ago. I learned to celebrate every pound, every half pound. Every time I passed up whatever treat that I wanted, every time I did that extra step or that extra walk or whatever, I had to celebrate incrementally. Sometimes in business, and big goals, we get so caught up in the, "Well I'm not where I want to be yet." Or, "I'm not where he is yet, or she is yet" that we don't celebrate how much further ahead we already are.

There is a reason that the twelve-step programs have you count your days. Have you count your days of success. So a good friend of ours, Paul Evans, he had a good friend in high school that had a very very deep addiction. At the age that they are now, he would celebrate every day of sobriety, every day off those drugs. Then somebody would say, "Well how do you stay off? How do you just tackle this and know this is for life?" He said, "I only have to beat it just today. I only have to beat it for today. Just for today, I can do this. Just for today, I can do this."

I think if we embrace that a little more with our work culture and our goal culture, I can guarantee to you that Mark Zuckerberg never had in mind for Facebook, Facebook the way it is today. He celebrated that first bit of code. He celebrated those first 100 students that got on there and the first time he made relationship statuses work. If we don't celebrate until we're done, we never get to the finish line. We have to celebrate every step and every achievement. So that's important.

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The other thing is, sometimes we're so busy working on the busy and the nonessential that we never have any fruit to celebrate. We never make any money to celebrate or we never hit a milestone because we're so busy either putting out fires or working on the stuff that we're comfortable with like paperwork or calendaring or mind mapping or ordering graphics or tweaking our website that we don't have anything to celebrate.

So in order to renew your energy, you have to not just buy the tennis shoes, lace up the tennis shoes, do those kinds of things, you have to actually go take some steps. Let's go take some steps and quit just shopping and prepping. Let's have fruit to celebrate. Let's make sure we celebrate it. And celebrate with some like-minded folks.

One last key that I think is super important, and that is know why you're working on it to begin with. The why of what you do is very very important and it has to matter for the long haul. Most people, David, and I know you've heard me say this probably since 2008 when we met, most people are not driven by money.

David: Right.

Carrie: If we were really driven by money, we would have the wealth of Trump. That's a man that really is driven by money. And actually, I think he's more driven by power than money. So we're not even going to get into a political conversation but I think that most people are not driven by money. We're driven by whatever the money provides for us.

So for me, this means that I can afford the \$4500 a month tuition for my special needs son in his work program. Everybody think about that number for just a minute.

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\$4500 a month since he was 14 years old probably until the end of his life. This is not anything you can get a scholarship for or that you get insurance reimbursement for. There are some tax breaks but the fact is, how do you handle something like that? Most people, I mean that's a salary for a lot of people.

David: Right.

Carrie: So how do you handle that? Well you ramp up your production. You start a business. You do something. Am I motivated by money? No. But I'm motivating about my son having the best opportunity, the best therapy, the safest place, the most nurturing environment that he could possibly have. That motivates me, not the money.

So we have to really know what our why is. I didn't want to lose weight to look skinny or to get high school skinny, because the fact is I'm 30 pounds less than high school. I was chunky in high school, that was an easy goal. But I wanted to be healthier. I wanted to feel good. And I have three girls that I wanted to be an amazing role model for. That you don't have to be dictated by your size or your image. You don't have to be held back by those things.

So if you're super clear on your why you're doing what you're doing and you're super clear on who you're doing it for, you have a group of like-minded people to do it with and celebrate with you, you're celebrating your wins, you're producing fruit, you can't lose. You absolutely cannot lose.

David: Wow, you gave some fantastic tips there, Carrie, and you're so right. One of the things that I see so often is that hardworking entrepreneurs that have that strong work ethic, they'll self-sacrifice to the point where they'll plug

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away to the latter part of a career. They're getting maybe to their late 50s or 60s, even approaching their 70s in life, and still waiting for what they call, or what I call, "someday." And we both know there's no day of the week called someday.

But so many people think that there's a someday when I get everything just right, whatever that is. I think I have enough money to be secure. I have the right house. Or I've done this or that. Whatever that is in business and using a dollar or revenue metric, as you said, can never be the key driver because that will never satisfy.

I think it's the struggle, Carrie, that we have to overcome. The challenges that are there in life that we overcome that drives us to our why. You're right, when it's strong enough, when your why is defined, and it's clear to you, then you'll make things happen, the right things. And you get up every day excited to be up and not having to say, "Well I've got to go drag through another day just to get to the end of the day." That's not a life. Waiting until you think you're going to have everything right, that just never happens.

Carrie: Yep. And you know my pastor said this recently and I thought it was so interesting because it jibes so much with what I teach in business. He said, "The constant pursuit of finding a risk-free place to stand is causing extreme paralysis in us."

David: That's good.

Carrie: Right? I wanted to shout at the platform, "Say it again. I'm writing that down. Say it again." The constant pursuit of finding a risk-free place to stand is causing extreme paralysis. So we want to wait until we have enough

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money saved before we pursue this. We want to wait until the kid is in school so that we don't have to worry affecting them or having childcare for them. We want to wait until we're thin enough so that we don't have to risk video comments or any judgment when we're on stage.

We want to wait until we're old enough, young enough, tall enough, credentialed enough, experienced enough, married enough, or single enough. You know, whatever it is. We're trying to find that risk-free place to stand and there is no celebration in that. Nobody has been celebrated for not taking risks.

David: I love that.

Carrie: Except insurance companies. Insurance companies celebrate when you take no risks. That's about the only industry that celebrates that.

David: I love that. That's very very powerful. Last question I've got for you, this pertains to again so many people, but I know a lot of the doctors and dentists and professionals who have gone through exquisite years of becoming very technically specific at what they do. Could be a brain surgeon, that has this real art and skill for technical aspects.

The problem with that kind of a mindset, Carrie, is sometimes too much of a perfection and control. Now that's great when someone's working on your body or in your mouth or something, you want someone who's very detail oriented. But that also sometimes has a negative factor or influence in their life in the bigger picture. Do you see that and how can someone kind of deal between those two different positions?



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Carrie: Okay, so are we talking about the people listening that have been specialized, is that my audience? Is that what you're telling me?

David: Yeah, we're pretty specialized so we don't want to give up. "I better be there to control it all." And of course, we know what that does.

Carrie: There's so many things behind that. So guys, let me tell you. I'm not like that super-credentialed anything. I did get a teacher certificate. It taught me to teach several different areas, so I do get that. But what I will say is this, when you've been through an academic track like that and then a professional track like that, you know that when you take the next test and have the next amount of practicum hours, then you're qualified, right? Am I speaking the right language?

David: Yes. Exactly.

Carrie: Okay, in business there's not that. So it's a very uncomfortable place to be for academics, for medics, for therapists, for people that have had to, for lack of a better term, jump through a specific set of tests and hoops. It's a very challenging place because how do you know when you're enough? Because there is no test. There's no credentials. There is no amount of practicum. There is only just doing it.

So I actually posted this on my Facebook the other day, "You don't learn to bike by reading about riding a bike or watching YouTubes about riding a bike or interviewing other people about riding a bike. You only learn to ride a bike by getting on the bike and falling off the bike several times." That's how you figure it out. So I think your

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audience, you guys really need to embrace just the practicum.

Sometimes you get to skip to the practicum now, and it's self-guided. You're going to fall down. You're going to mess up. There's nothing hanging on the wall that says you're certified enough. But again, it goes back to that risk-free place to stand. There's no medical board behind you. No malpractice by you protecting you. There are some risks in running a business and in taking some of those leaps. There can be a tremendous fear in that but there's also a tremendous freedom in that. For the first time, you get to just say, "Oh, hey, look, a different area of the mouth, let me just go figure that out."

David: Right.

Carrie: So I think that's kind of the hard thing when you're looking at jumping from where you've been to where you want to be. People like me that have always been a little bit of a risk taker and questioned all that establishment, I only finished my degree because I married young and I promised my daddy that I wouldn't give up on my degree. I mean, it was a promise degree. Period.

I really only worked in that degree a couple of years and then I've kind of done my own thing since. But my daughter is studying music therapy and it's a regimented, certified, very credentialed thing, like what you guys do. So I get it. I'm not anti-that. But it is hard to make an entrepreneurial leap when you're used to a governing board and a set of best practices and credentials and tests to take.

David: That's well said. Carrie, what is going to be your legacy? What do you want to leave for your family and all the

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people that you contact and you have influence with?  
What do you want to leave?

Carrie: Hmm. That question makes me emotional so that choked me up and I didn't expect it. I would hope that my kids and my family, and my church members, my clients, would say, "Number one, she made us smile. She either made us laugh or she made us smile. And number two, she helped us believe in ourselves. She helped us see what we couldn't see."

It's really that simple for me. I have no desire or wish to leave a big business empire or buildings with my names on it or any of that. But if people remember, if they hear my name and they smile in spite of themselves, that to me is a really powerful legacy and that's my heart's desire.

David: Very good. Well, Carrie Wilkerson, the Barefoot Executive, thank you so much for your time today. Awesome tips. It's always a pleasure to get a chance to connect with you, talk to you, see what's going on in your life and just see that bigger picture which is so important.

Carrie: Thank you, David. Thanks for having me.

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