

## Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?



### **Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Dr. David Phelps**

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps**

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

You're listening to the Dentist Freedom Blueprint podcast, powered by Freedom Founders with your host Dr. David Phelps, where the word retirement is bad and true freedom can be secured in three to five years or less. You'll get anti-traditional advice to maximize the value of your practice and multiply your transition options. Create safe and steady wealth building through highly curated real estate and build extraordinary freedom for what matters most to you without depending on the volatility of Wall Street. More at [FreedomFounders.com](http://FreedomFounders.com).

David Phelps: Good day, everyone. This is Dr. David Phelps of the Freedom Founders Mastermind community and Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast. Today I'm really excited to dig in and learn more about a person I had a chance to become acquainted with a few weeks back, and that's Marilee Sears. Marilee, how are you doing today?

Marilee Sears: I'm doing fantastic. I'm so happy to be here and having this conversation with you, Dr. Phelps.

David Phelps: Well, Mary Lee, we definitely found some things that are common in our background. I'm going to pull some of those things out today because I think this is very important. I think it comes down to really what our why is in life. What makes us tick? What makes us, allows us, or gives us the passion to do what we do?

So to get a little bit of your background, Mary Lee, I know that you started working in your father's dental office when you were only 12 years old, I guess there weren't real strict child labor laws back then, or maybe you just snuck in the back door. Were you on payroll or did you

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps**

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

get paid that through other things that your dad would otherwise not provide for you? I'm just curious.

Marilee Sears: Okay, Dr. Phelps, I love the questions that you asked. We were having the conversation before we started the recording. I was like, you have such great questions. No one's ever asked me that before, but no, I was actually on the payroll. I think I was on a minimum wage when I started. I think I was making \$6.15 an hour in Oregon at the age of 12, which was pretty darn sweet because the best babysitting job that I had, the very best paid \$5 an hour. So I was on the payroll, there wasn't a whole lot of... What is the word for when you are given advantages because you're family? There wasn't a whole lot of that, I have to say. I was taking out the garbages, I was doing the sterilization room. I was cleaning and turning over the treatment rooms from day one. They showed me how to do it and I got started.

David Phelps: So you definitely put the work in. It wasn't just like, "Oh, you're coming in," and they're going babysit you. You were there, you were working, you were producing, you're providing real service and therefore you were compensated, I'd say very fairly.

Marilee Sears: Oh, I was compensated very fairly, and even more important I think than the money that I was earning, because it'd be going into sixth grade was when I started working in his office and getting these patients that were, from what I remember, like \$75 and thinking I was rich because I was getting this \$75 paycheck, was what I learned in the dental office. Yes, my dad, he expected a lot from us. So yes, I had to be working.

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

One of the things I also realized is that I like to be busy, I like to be productive. So there were times when the office wouldn't be as busy and I would constantly, I'd be finally charts. Those were the slowest days, the time would never pass. The days that there was lots of trays to do and lots of rooms to turn over. Those were the happiest days I had in my office when I was 12, 13 years old.

David Phelps: That's great. Great to have those memories.

Marilee Sears: Yeah.

David Phelps: So since then, you went on and worked as a dental assistant, front office, hygiene, and in practice management. So you definitely have evolved over the years, which I think it's very, very cool and we're going to talk a little bit about how that came about. You also work a lot in different dental practices during your first seven years as a dental hygienist. You said actually like 73, that's a lot of offices. So you obviously got to see a wide spectrum of offices, some that probably work up and operated very efficiently and did a lot of things that you probably saw, wow, this really works, and probably some that were on the other end of the spectrum, were very dysfunctional. So you saw the gamut, you saw. A lot of people, we don't get that experience. We go into one office or we open our practice as a dentist and we that's all we know. So you had this wide spectrum, which I think gave you an advantage to what you do today obviously, right?

Marilee Sears: Oh, absolutely. I would say I had the great foundation of being able to work in my dad's practice. Truthfully, he encouraged... I have a brother and sister that are both dentists, and then I have two other sisters along with

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps**

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

myself that are hygienists. My dad was a very big proponent of hygiene. He felt like it was a fantastic career. He loved the partnership that was there and available within dentistry. So I had the foundation when I went into dental hygiene school of having worked in his practice, having been an assistant, having done some front office things. So I had that, which I feel like gave me a great foundation for going to hygiene school.

But I don't think there was a better education than getting thrown into 73 different offices. My husband was a large part of that because he was going to business school and he had an internship. So I spent quite a bit of time temping. I spent the first two and a half years of my hygiene career in two different offices and just working in... Well, forgive me, three different offices, I worked one office on Fridays. So three different offices that I worked in, but then after about two and a half years of getting out of school, that's when my husband went to business school and had this internship. Over that time, I was able to work in over 60 different offices at doing hygiene, and in every single office, Dr. Phelps, I found something that I learned, something that made me better. In every office I found something that they could improve. Sometimes there'd be very little things that they can improve and sometimes there was huge holes of huge opportunities that they were missing. But I learned something for certain in every single office.

I would even come home and had notebook when I was temping, of what I learned at the office so that it could help me to become a better hygienist. So I felt like I was a really good hygienist because I had that business owner viewpoint going into hygiene school because of the

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

foundation of my dad and working some practice management in his office. But then it got amplified as I was going and temping in other offices because then I was really able to see how frequently these opportunities were being missed.

David Phelps: In some of the offices that you temped in, was there opportunity for you to in the right way, talk to the other staff or even the doctor, in the right way to say, "Hey, I've got an idea here." Because some offices, you can, some offices you can't, probably. What happened there?

Marilee Sears: Okay, so I have been so completely blessed in my career in dentistry. So I don't think I worked with some incredible doctors. Even when I was temping in Washington DC, I had a doctor that pulled me into his office and said, "I would really love to work with you, full stuff. I know that your husband's in business school, but what you think about going to dental school and you can come into my practice?" I had two different doctors that gave me that, approached me to say, "We would love for you to be a dentist and to join our practice." So that got the conversation going because the first time that that conversation happened, I was thinking, I'm not necessarily thinking about going to dental school. My husband and I were fairly newly married, and we were trying to decide what was happening next in our family, but it got me thinking about, I also want to have a greater impact than what I'm having right now. I love working in offices. I love the patients, but what can I do that has the greatest impact?

What's interesting is he went to business school in North Carolina. I've been working on the West Coast and some

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

of the offices that I had interviewed with in North Carolina, I didn't feel like had the same standards of care that I had had in the two phenomenal offices that I had already worked at, worked with out of hygiene school. So I had said this to my husband, "I just don't know if I can go into these offices and work there comfortably as a hygienist, knowing that there's a lot of diseases not being treated." He said, "Why don't you look at it as an opportunity and say, I want to work here as a hygienist, however, I have some certain standards, and I want to know that you're open to the way that I operate and open to my feedback."

That's essentially what happened in the first practice that I worked at in North Carolina. It was a perio office and I became the treatment coordinator. I was a hygienist but I would be the first person that patients would see. I was the new patient coordinator and I'd be presenting treatment and also seeing hygiene patients. But that became the launchpad for the hygiene coaching that I ultimately began doing, is that I realized that I didn't just have to look at something and say, "It's broken. Okay, here's how I can learn from it." I could look at something and say, "Maybe not, that's maybe too harsh of a word, it's broken. It could be more effective. Let's see what we can do to make it as effective as possible."

So I would have those conversations fortunately, with a lot of the dentists that I temped with. I would never have it on that first day that I was temping because I felt like that was completely inappropriate, but frequently, I would just say, "Hey, if you want to have a conversation about a few ideas that I have to make the practice more productive, I'm happy to have that conversation anytime."

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

So I came out of that summer temping in the Washington DC area and I had my first three hygiene coaching clients from offices that I temped in. I have to say, I don't feel like I'm a pushy person. Some people want what we have and some people don't. I feel like I'm the kind of person that's like, "Hey, if you want to work together, great, if you don't then it's clear, we don't work together." I've been really fortunate to have a lot of dentists after I've temped with them, or after I temped as a hygienist, reach out and just say, "I want to know more about what we could do." Sometimes that just meant speaking with the hygienists that they hired and sharing a little bit about what my philosophy was. In some instances that meant us actually working together as a coaching client.

David Phelps: So that's such a great lesson I think for anybody in life, wherever one is in their stages is that you may be working in an environment where you don't control it, you're not the owner. In this case you're a hygienist, but you have a background, experience, a passion for a certain level of expertise, efficiency that you know can be met because you've seen it, because I think that's an okay thing if you've seen it and you know it's been done then, you know in another environment, gosh, if they were only doing this, if they only knew what to say, all the different things that you do. Once you have that vision, then it becomes a passion for you. I know that's what happened to you, so now you have a few offices that say, "Hey, sure, we'd be open to some of your ideas," and they're receptive so now you're an organic, as you said, coaching program, which was not even formalized, but because of your passion.



## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

So my point is the lesson here is no matter where you are in your environment, and this could be hygienists, could be associate doctors. If you listen to what she said, she had a vision for what could be because she had seen it. Being in an environment where there was a receptiveness to that, now you've got a place to become a more valuable team player, and that can lead to whatever, you never know. Whatever it is, you'll find it. So I just want to make sure that people got that because that's how you start that. That's part of your story.

Now, I promise we're going to get to the rest of it, but I'm trying to build a suspense here because this is really good. No, I love that. I love the backstory. People want to know how people got from here to here, it's never a straight shot, it's never a vision from the front end. It's in life, I think you have to be curious and you have to have a servant heart. When you put those two things together, there's no limit to the impact, as you said earlier, Marilee, the impact that you can have, and that's what life's about. I mean, yes, you have to make money and secure your family and those things but that's base level. I mean, what do you want to do? Right?

Marilee Sears: Absolutely. I think that is the biggest thing that we all search for is a meaning, a purpose, an impact that we are truly creating. And Dr. Phelps, right before we got on, I just thought of one of my favorite quotes, which is, "The most common way that people lose their power is by believing they don't have any." I see that from hygienists and assistants and even office managers and associate dentists, even up to the practice owners, that they don't realize that the power that they have to change the circumstances around us. That's something I'm not going

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

to say that I hold my power very well every day, but I think that's a quote that I take very much to heart, is that when I start thinking, oh, this practice could be different or my life could be different, if only... it's outward, we focused. I know that it's time to again, look myself in the mirror and say, "How can I make a difference?" Because that's where I had really so much fun that summer that I was temping.

I think for me personally, there's a lot of anxiety that goes with temping because you're in a new situation, learning new systems every day. But by the end of that time of seriously, like a hundred days of temping in a row, I had learned so much and I felt very much proud of the fact that I felt like I owned by power, each of those practices because no matter what I felt like I could do something that was benefiting the practice. Again, sometimes that meant that there was a conversation that happened afterwards, regardless about me working with the practice. I just want to see practices improved because when practices improve, our patient's health improves. That impact and that purpose that we're serving, it grows, our impact increases.

So I just want to say to everyone listening, just to reiterate what you also said Dr. Phelps, is, don't think that you don't have power because you're not the practice owner, and if you are the practice owner again, do not think that you don't have power because you absolutely do. Everyone in every single position has some amount of power and you just have to think about what's the impact you want to make. If you go from that place, you can usually start to see, you can start to do something to go in that direction.

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

David Phelps: Really, really good. Really good. All right. So Marilee, I know that your family, your siblings, number 10, correct?

Marilee Sears: Yes, 11. I'm never, I'm number 10 in the family, but 11 children. No twins, all from the same mom and dad. I can't remember if I shared this with you previously, Dr. Phelps, but my mom knew that she wanted to have 12 kids from the time she was in high school. I kid around that she never had that conversation with my dad before they got married. So my dad wanted two, and my mom wanted 12, so they compromised and they had 11.

David Phelps: Nice compromise. Yeah, that worked out.

Marilee Sears: Yes, exactly.

David Phelps: That worked out very well, didn't it? Oh my gosh. Your dad, dentist. Now, was he an orthodontist by specialty or do he incorporate both?

Marilee Sears: He incorporated orthodontics as yes, general dentist who incorporate ortho, maybe 20 years, 25 years into his practice.

David Phelps: Did he work solo or did he have associates or partners during his career?

Marilee Sears: That's a great question. He was solo the majority of the time. The last, probably seven years of his practice, he also had three different associates that came into his practice. One of those associates who ultimately took over the practice.

David Phelps: Got it. Okay. So your dad was a very responsible, ethical, hardworking man, father, husband, dentist for many years. In fact, he practiced a well into his 70s.

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps**

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

Marilee Sears: Yes.

David Phelps: Then like happens in life, he was hit by a health crisis. You want to talk a little bit about that?

Marilee Sears: Yeah, absolutely. My dad really lived for his practice. I say that he spent the best hours of each day and the best years of his life in those practice doors. I always felt like he did it because he wanted to, that was his place, that was his kingdom. So he wanted to spend those hours and days within the practice.

It wasn't until in his 70s, he was 70... I believe he was 76 years old. Forgive me that I can't recall—76 or 77. I guess he was 77 when he was diagnosed with leukemia because he passed away before his next birthday. So when he was 77, he was still practicing, still practicing full time. He wasn't working every Thursday but he was working Monday through Wednesday and some Thursdays. He was diagnosed with leukemia. He started the chemo treatment and within a matter of about two, two and a half months, he couldn't walk across the house. He couldn't walk from his bedroom to the front door to go to the office.

It was obviously devastating because as all of us kids just wanted him to take care of himself. We were just concerned about him and yet he was still wanting to see patients and he was still pushing himself. I was so upset at the time thinking, why is he only caring about the practice? About three months after he'd been diagnosed with leukemia, my sister was working as his hygienist and I lived about three hours away. We came and more or less did an intervention, what we expect it to be an intervention. We sat down across the table from him and

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps**

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

my mom and said, "Dad, can't do this anymore. You cannot be practicing dentistry." He said, "You're absolutely right. Here are the keys to the practice. Take care of my patients, take care of the practice, take care of mom. I really have to focus on myself."

In that moment I felt such relief because I was like, he's finally doing it. He's finally putting himself and our family first. But, so we took the keys, we drove to the practice, and that relief was so short lived because we started running reports and we started looking at things. I realized in that next hour that my dad didn't practice so much because he wanted to, he was practicing so much at 77 years old because he had to. That he had to, there were considerable debts and things that he had. The practice was not in a good position financially. So he had felt compelled to continue to push himself and to practice. It definitely became my mission to not leave anybody else in that kind of a situation where you're practicing because you have to, even when you're facing your own health or your family's health or life, that the biggest thing on your mind is, how am I going to do this? How am I going to pay my bills? There's times in life when that shouldn't be your number one question. I just didn't want anyone to be in that same position that we were in, that my dad was in, that my mom was in at that point in time.

So I know we also... so from that standpoint, I realized that working hard didn't mean financial success. In fact, it frequently goes opposite. It's the opposite, that the dentist that you see working so, so, so, so hard, sometimes are having the smallest amount of profits for the smallest amount of success. That's heartbreaking for me to see because my dad worked, put his heart and soul into that

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps**

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

practice. It should have been a completely different picture.

Then just, my dad ended up passing away a little bit less than two months later from the time that he stopped seeing patients. As you were saying, he was a stand up guy, such a stand up guy. So at his memorial, there were thousands of people there. I mean, to the point that they could not fit any more people in the church and the extended person that they had opened up extended to... Anyway, it was completely filled. I went out at the end of the service and saw all those people, many people standing because there were no more chairs, and thought, I felt such pride of being his daughter because he had created this legacy for our family name and in our community by his service. It was as though I could hear my dad just right on my shoulder saying into my ear, "And if I could do it again, I would do it so differently." That made probably the biggest difference to me because it made me realize, again, that you can do a lot of good in your life and still realize, I gave away a lot of that power, or I made a lot of decisions that I would've done differently looking at it now from the big picture.

So I was 33 years old at the time when my dad passed away. That was the pivotal moment in my life where I felt like he gave me that gift of saying, "If I could do it again, I would do it so differently. So don't wait if you want things to be different." So it became a conversation that my husband and I had, we already had our two young sons at the time, of what do we want our lives to look like so that we're not looking back and saying, "If we could do it again, I would do a whole heck of a lot differently."

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

David Phelps: So from that point that you and your sister took over your dad's practice. Then obviously you had to help with the transition. Did that happen within the next months or year?

Marilee Sears: I honestly thought my dad passed away in November. My husband and I had a cruise in January or February I can't remember now, but I remember thinking that it was going to all be taken care of by that time. We'd already booked to this cruise and thinking, oh yeah, it's all going to be taken care of by then. It must have been in February because if I had only known. No, it took almost an entire year for the transition to happen. The general dental practice part took probably about four to five months. The ortho practice part took longer. That's a piece that took more like a year to fully transition the ortho practice and bringing in an orthodontist and all of those pieces. So it took almost exactly a year. In fact, it took a lot longer than I expected. Let me just put it that way.

David Phelps: So from that time you developed your real passion, your real why, about where your purpose, the legacy for your dad, which I think is so great. To take all the good that he created, the Goodwill for the patients, for the community that was fully evident at his memorial. Then saying, "What would he want me to do? If I have the power, what would dad want me to do?" You said you heard his voice that, "If I had to do it over again, I'd do it differently."

So what do you think, with not only the experience with your father, but with other dentists that you work with, who like your father have the skillset, the dedication, the passion for doing great work. What do you think is missing that doesn't allow them to live their life in a

## Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?

different way? Is it merely, is it oftentimes, we just don't know what we don't know? Is it just blind spots that we just think this is the way you have to do it and we've never been receptive or we've never looked outside? What do you think it is?

Marilee Sears: I think that there's a certain kind of person that's attracted to dentistry, and a lot of times it's like we are brought into it, it's a family type of relationship. I think that there's a tendency to think hard work pays off. So if I'm just working hard, it's going to pay off. You know what? If I have to work even harder, it's going to pay off. I'm all for hard work but I think I see too many dentists that are working so hard that they never are taking a step back to think, what am I working hard towards? What am I working hard for?

And I would say it's... Stephen R. Covey's book, the Seven Habits of Highly Productive People. It's, begin with that end in mind. I think whether you are a new dentist or you've been practicing for 40 plus years, it's never too late to take a step back and say, "What am I practicing for?" Because I think so many dentists still imprisoned by their practice, the practice makes the decisions. When instead, they are the practice owner and their practice should be empowering them to live the life they want or to have the lifestyle that they want. So that's the first thing, I think not taking a step back to evaluate, what am I working for?

That's one of the things that truly my husband and I did after my dad's memorial. It didn't happen right away because Dr. Phelps, those moments, those really honest conversations with ourselves and with the people that we love the most, those are really ongoing conversations



## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

because you can talk about, "Hey, do you want to go to Hawaii this year for vacation or are we going to go to Mexico?" Those are easy conversations, but to think about, if I could completely design my life, this is how I want it to look. Then what can I be doing tomorrow and consistently within my life to make it look more that way? So that's the first thing is I think most dentists don't know what they're working so hard for. They just know they're working hard or working too hard.

Then the second mistake that I think dentists make is they think the answer is outside their practice or outside themselves. That's why I wrote down that quote of, "The most common way that people lose their power is by believing they don't have any." As a hygienist, I loved the fact that I wasn't marketing for new patients. I wasn't doing anything different, but yet I could increase the profits in the practice and I could see this happen over and over again. It was just by making some really simple changes within the conversations and within the way that we were treatment planning and looking at additional services that we could be bringing into the practice, that it meant we weren't working any harder in marketing, that we weren't expending our hours, but yet the office was able to be more productive and more profitable.

So that's where I encourage everybody to look first is, where are the opportunities that are already within your practice? Before you start expanding your hours, before you start opening up more days, probably before you even start looking at associates. What are the opportunities that are there within your patient base right now? Because I have come to believe in working now with over a hundred offices, putting systems in place, that

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

the profit is in prevention. If you can have great systems from throughout your office and including your hygiene, I think that's a huge backbone of having good systems. Then the profit is there doing prevention, and then the growth happens through retention. If you can keep the patients that are within your practice and then consistently increase the treatment that you're providing and the services that you're providing to your patients, the practice grows and the income grows and yet you don't have to work harder for it.

David Phelps: A lot of wisdom right there. Just hanging onto what you just said, I think too often... and any business can be this way, not just dental practices, is we all believe that the lifeblood are new patients, new clients, customers. That is a part of it no question, but you're right. You can only grow so fast when you're bleeding out the side heavily. So the retention piece really big, and if you have the systems in place, prevention, you have customers, clients, and in this case patients, that are also very perceptive and understanding what the value is of being in that practice and the value that they're getting from getting that kind of treatment and the prevention. Now you've got core customers that aren't going to leave and that's what you build the base off of that core. That just now you've got clear avatars. This is what our practice is about. Not just serving everybody and trying to get more people in the door and the typical response. Right?

Marilee Sears: Exactly, because and you can look at it again, for all those dentists listening. Think about this. You probably, I hope you keep count of your new patients that you're getting each day, week and month. I hope that you are tracking that, you should be. But then I also hope that

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

you're tracking how many patients that you see that have their next appointment scheduled before they leave. That's your retention. Forgive me, I'm not going to give the exact statistic, but there's something like if you can decrease your attrition, if you can improve your patient retention, the amount of patients that you're losing each year, if you can decrease your attrition rate, the amount of patients you lose each year by half, within three years most practices will have doubled their size because they think it's a new patient problem. I'm not saying it's never, as you said, Dr. Phelps, new patients are a key part of the equation as well but if you're only looking at the patients and you're not looking at attrition, the back door, you're only looking at one side of the equation and the two work together.

David Phelps: No question, no question. Something else you were talking about is having the, I call them the difficult conversations. You said having the conversation is not about where the next vacation is going to be, or we're going to add onto the house, or we got the boat or whatever. Those are the fun lifestyle things, but the difficult conversations that many people, couples, families, do not have because it's almost like we don't talk about that is, what are we really doing this for? What's all the hard work for? I think in society we're conditioned that yes, as you said, we're conditioned to work hard. Working hard, work ethic, that is important. That's what this country is built on, but what are we doing it for? Instead of letting the business run us, the practice want us, why don't we build a practice that serves what we want so we don't get to the end of our life and look back and have regrets, because far too often it happens. You know it, it's not just your father. It's commonplace for hardworking

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

people to get down the road and go, "Wow, I missed the boat."

So I think that too many people want tactics. They want a tactical approach. I got a problem, I'm not profitable, so yeah, I need more new patients, or I need this wiz-bang or this marketing or whatever. Until you have the conversation with getting clarity, what are you doing this for? Now, let's reverse engineer and let's create something that now has a strategy behind it, then we'll insert the tactics. Right?

Marilee Sears: Exactly. Again, I think you can use the tactics. I think you can use the tactics too. Okay, we could have another conversation. We talk about x-ray frequency, we could talk about fluoride usage, or we could talk about sealants and preventative treatment, but I think the tactics fall by the wayside when they are not coming from that place of why we're doing it. Both for our patient's health, but then also for our personal wellbeing as well, because I think that's one of the biggest reasons why... Oh yeah, I worked with this consultant, but then we kind of stopped doing it. In part it's because yeah, we have our habits and we have our natural tendencies that we get into, but I think the other reason is that it didn't really feel like there was a payoff. We didn't feel, yeah, we were making more, but what happened to that money?

I have had that happen personally. In fact, my husband again, have had this conversation. That before we started being much more intentional with our lives, he was working at Microsoft. He had a great job every year. He would get a raise and Dr. Phelps, I can't tell you what we did with that money each year. In fact, we laugh about it

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

because when he left his job, we were getting by on considerably less and we were thinking, what did we do with all that money? What did we do with it? But now, we are so much more intentional with our money and so much more intentional with our lives.

So the interesting part is that we're able to save and invest more because we're not looking for things to fill our lives. Things are fun, trips are awesome. Again, I'm not saying you shouldn't have any of those things, but I think it is so worth pushing the pause button for an afternoon and then having that consistent conversation of, what does it look like? Where are we going from here? My husband and I had many nights, it's usually what's happening as we're getting ready for bed, that these conversations of, where do we go from here? They didn't always go really smoothly because we had different visions and we had different goals. But at the end of the day, it happened. I think that's what happened is if you don't give up on it, you're able to build something and be so proud of it because you did it. It came from you, and that's that you've done, Dr. Phelps, with the Freedom Founders. It's incredible that you've created this path that people can follow to gain freedom. It's like, it means so much when we achieve that because we worked for it. It's so much better than working hard and then going, but where did it go or what was that all for?

David Phelps: When you get to that place in life when you start to have some space, as you said, stepping back, getting clarity and creating that practice, that business that starts to provide for a lifestyle. Not all about things, but about time, about memories, about things that are really important. When you create that vacuum, then that's when you get

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](#) with Dr. David Phelps**

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

to, I think, start to evolve yourself to higher levels of purpose and meaning. When we start out in life, it's all about, I got to pay the bills. I got to pay the debt, the student loans, I get it. Right, right?

Marilee Sears: Yes.

David Phelps: I mean, that's where we all start. It's the survival mode of Maslow's hierarchy. Then we move to stability, and then we get... I changed the name, it's called comfort zone. Now we're in comfort zone. Like you said, making more money, but where is it all going? Then we're on this, that treadmill that it's working but where's the end game? Where's the end that we're shooting for? How are we going to get there if we don't know what that looks like? But we can never go back to where we are today. Oh, we've done great. We've worked hard. We've built X, but is X really serving what we want? Not quite. Then what do we need to do to gain that vision, to move from X to our point where that, the end game? Not meaning the end of life, but the end game in terms of where do you want to be? How do you want to continue to serve? Where's the impact coming from? So you can stay in your practice, how you want to? You build it, you create it, multiple practices, one practice, but now you've got a reason to do it. Not built on everybody else that says you got to do this or that. That's not the way to do it at all.

Marilee Sears: Exactly, and you know what? There's some boldness and some I think huge confidence that comes from doing it your way. Again, it could be that you get an associate when everyone else is like, "You're getting an associate? You're crazy." You're like, no, because I have this vision and I know it's going to happen. I'm doing it my way.

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

That's what happens is when you know, if you can drown out those other voices, because let's face it. We all want to know that... We have community within dentistry and, hey, what'd you guys think of this? But when you know what you're doing, you can listen to your voice and go, yeah, other people might think I'm doing something crazy, but I know I'm doing it for this. I know what's going to... There's something that is just so bold and powerful about that. I'm going to say this as a hygienist and as a team member, that teams love working with dentists and practice owners that have that kind of a foundation, that kind of is strength, that kind of a boldness.

David Phelps: Yeah. They don't expect you to be perfect and everything go right. They just want you to step out there and say, "This is what we're about. This is what I want to do. Let's give it a go, let's pilot test something. You know what? Doesn't work, that's okay. We'll change something." But yes, you're right. That's what brings life to the practice, to the business. That's where people want to show up and go, "Hey, something good and fun is going to happen today. We're going to take on some new challenges. We're going to do some new things, not just routine, routine, routine."

I always say, Marilee, I say, "Don't follow the majority because the majority is usually wrong. Follow your voice. That's where you want to go in life." I think you've brought this out today. You've brought it out, so many nuggets, I've been writing notes here. We're going to put them in the show notes but I mean, they're one after the other, after the other, after the other, that hopefully people will take time to really listen to this or write some of them down, or just pick them off the show notes because

## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

you've really hit them. It's because you've lived a life where you have taken lessons that you've learned, good and bad. You've taking those and it's emboldened you to live your life and what you do today too with your outreach for dental owners, hygienists, or staff, the practices, in emboldening them to live their life. So the best place for people to reach you, to get more within your platform and what you, it would be? I know Marilee Sears coaching is that the website?

Marilee Sears: That is the website and then [Marileesears@gmail.com](mailto:Marileesears@gmail.com), that's the best way to reach me. I have a few things. I would be happy to share, it's the same things that I do with clients and friends. I would be happy to share it. One is, just like those five core questions, because I think it helps to have a launching... Have something that you're starting from when you're putting together that vision and what it is that you're working for. So again, people can just email me that, and then another thing that I've actually just created, I'm finishing it up right now. It's just a 10-day money finder, which is things that are already within your practice right now that you can utilize to improve your cash flow, and to give you a little bit more breathing room, especially right now. So again, [marileesearscoaching.com](http://marileesearscoaching.com), that's my website and they can just also email me at [marileesearsa@gmail.com](mailto:marileesearsa@gmail.com). That's a great way to connect with me as well.

David Phelps: Perfect, and if you want to give Lindsey a link to either of those, the five core questions or the 10 day money finder for cashflow, we can also put those in the show notes so they can get it both ways.

Marilee Sears: Perfect, that's perfect.



## **Ep #292: Marilee Sears - Working Hard, But For What?**

David Phelps: Okay, Marilee, it's been a true pleasure. Thanks for your time today.

Marilee Sears: Dr, Phelps, always such a pleasure to speak with you. Thank you so much for having me.

You've been listening to the Dentist Freedom Blueprint podcast. If you're tired of trading time for dollars and you're uncertain that Wall Street has your best interest at heart, then take the next step to more cashflow, security and ultimately more freedom. Text the word newsletter to 972-203-6960 to receive David's monthly online newsletter for free or text the word book to receive your new free copy of David's book From High Income to High Net Worth delivered right to your home. Text 972-203-6960.

[More@freedomfounders.com](mailto:More@freedomfounders.com).