

**A Conversation with Laura Tremaine,
Author of “Share Your Stuff. I’ll Go First.”**

Q. First of all, thanks so much for making time to talk to us today! Congratulations on the new book—“Share Your Stuff. I’ll Go First.” Just to kick us off: Can you explain the concept of the book? What is the premise?

A. The idea for the book came from my podcast, “[10 Things to Tell You](#),” that I created after years of seeing women on the internet express how lonely they were—I understood. Living in Los Angeles, I’ve experienced some really deep periods of loneliness. Two things that propelled me out of lonely times were starting a book club and starting a blog called “[Hollywood Housewife](#).” When I started the blog, I found that women were really frank about how lonely they were.

I started “10 Things to Tell You” because I felt like people just needed deeper conversations. We have all these connections online, so people aren’t lonely in the traditional way. It is a loneliness born out of everything seeming to stick to the surface. Their online life is surface, and what we see of everyone else is just the surface, too. It trickled into real life, too: Mom friends, church communities—nobody was going very deep. It wasn’t because people didn’t have the capacity. Everybody’s just so busy and also scared of vulnerability.

So “10 Things to Tell You” began as just prompts and conversation starters for deeper dialogues. In doing that—in creating these sparks for people—I realized I’d need to give my own answers, too.

I’d shared so much of my life on “Hollywood Housewife”—about family life and stuff. But the sharing I started doing because of “10 Things to Tell You” was less about motherhood and more about myself, my life, and the things that have happened that have made a big impact—plus the people who’ve affected my life. It became about putting these people and events in perspective. Then, as I shared through the podcast, I realized that I wanted this to be a book: a permanent place for all of these questions to live so people could refer back. I decided on 10 of the biggest questions—the best questions—that brought about connection and turned them into 10 chapters of “Share Your Stuff. I’ll Go First.”

Q. The book utilizes such a great format. I’m oversimplifying a bit here, but basically, there is a big question followed by your own answers, and then broader reflections and encouragement for readers, then a list of questions that you know will help answer the big one. You take people by the hand and show them how to do it. Was this a natural approach for you—not just telling, but also showing?

A. Introspection is natural to me. I’ve always been a journaler, and I’ve always wanted, and I’ve always wanted to talk about what this relationship meant or what this season of my life meant. I’ve always packaged up my own life in a sort of storytelling way. When I started to do it online, it quickly became apparent that not everyone thinks like that.

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Big life questions can just be overwhelming. Whether it's something hard, like brokenness, or thinking about people who have influenced your life, I noticed that so many people couldn't answer who or why someone matters to them. We're not taught to be introspective. People aren't dumb—sharing and understanding their own experiences just doesn't come as naturally to some of us as it does to others. But we all benefit from it.

Some of the questions are deeper, but they're not all deep. One prompt requests 10 notable fashion choices from your life. For some, the answers might come easily and quickly: prom or my grandmother's wedding veil—decisions and moments like these. But even those quick answers might have deeper meanings. You might just say, "I love my prom dress from senior year." But walk that back a bit: Why did you love it? Did you feel pretty for the first time? Did you feel sophisticated? Did you pick it out with your mom?

Sometimes it's just about helping people to move past the surface answer to a question.

Q. Why do you think being able to be introspective is important for sharing and then connecting with others? How are all of these pieces connected?

A. I don't know the science behind the answer, but I do know what's worked in my own life. First of all, sharing made me feel seen. It made me feel like I wasn't just a generic person. I don't think I've ever said that out loud before, actually—but I do believe that some people struggle with wondering what makes them unique or special. They don't think there is anything interesting about them. And that's just not true. Things that don't feel interesting to you—that feel normal and even boring—might not be to others. But then, you share a detail from your life, and it's greeted with, "Whoa. I didn't know that about you."

When I started sharing, it gave me a self-confidence boost. I have never thought of myself as someone with a self-esteem problem. I was always a confident kid. But in adulthood, after a few things knock you down—a few heartbreaks, a few failures—you question yourself and feel lonely. When I started sharing with people and feeling connected with them, I started to realize, "I like me. I like having deep conversations, sharing, and listening."

The lonelier we get, and the more self-confidence we lose, we tend to retreat into ourselves. We think we don't want to be seen. Our self-talk revolves around the idea that we're not special or our stories don't matter. Our lives aren't pretty enough to put on Instagram. But when you're true to yourself and share that truth with others, you feel self-confident instead.

Q. This book is such a compelling read because there are sections that feel like an extremely well-written literary memoir—really vivid stories from your life—and then there are places where you address the reader directly, explain processes, and encourage. Do you feel like because of who you are, personally, and the way you process things, you got more out of sharing stories in such a literary way? As in, perhaps a painter would experience the same kind of connection if they painted their experience?

A. I don't know if this is the answer you want, but I've been writing online for a long time now—almost 11 years—and it took me a long time to write this book because I had some hang-ups. I care a lot about the quality of writing. I'm a big reader. I thought that if I wrote a nonfiction, personal development book, it wasn't art—or it couldn't be. I hadn't written about some of the stories I share in the book—I'd saved them for years—for that reason. It was almost as though these mediums weren't weighty enough for some of the stories I had to tell.

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Then, when I decided to put some of these stories in the book and began to write them, I realized in writing them that it didn't diminish the story to put it in a personal development book. It did become art to me—but it took me a long time to emotionally get there and to embrace that.

Q. That honesty with yourself and others that you just displayed is exactly what makes this book so good. It's all right there in the title: "Share Your Stuff. I'll Go First."

A. It's funny, Jenna Fischer wrote the foreword for the book, and I'm paraphrasing, but she says something like, "This book is not shtick. This is how Laura talks in real life." And it is. This definitely isn't a little gimmicky thing I came up with for marketing. This is truly how I talk and process: through sharing and introspection.

Q. This book is about a whole lot more than being a mother, but there is a passage you wrote about new mom anxiety that is really important. You wrote, "Mommy culture warned me not to lose myself in motherhood, but try as I might, I did get a little lost there for a while. I wish those messages weren't wrapped in caution tape but instead in the reassurance that women will, in fact, emerge from the woods. Because every single mom I know gets lost for a little bit, and then is found." Can you talk about realizing this?

A. I tried so hard not to get lost in early motherhood. I heard all of those messages loud and clear about not giving up hobbies, making time for yourself, and not becoming all about your kids. I remember telling my husband that I was not going to lose myself and my identity in motherhood. I had kids after most of my friends—I was 30 when I had my daughter, my first. So, not in a judgmental way, but in an observant way, I'd watched friends disappear into that motherhood fog for a minute. And I was determined not to let it happen to me.

I wrote about it on my blog and tried to show my family that motherhood wasn't slowing me down. My whole world didn't revolve around the baby.

But I inevitably found myself lost—because I think that's part of the process. It's not just in the fourth trimester, either, not just those early days of sleeplessness. When I found myself lost, I was years into it. Then I felt a lot of shame around it. Then, when I got a bit of clarity and could look at myself and my friends who were moms, I realized, "Oh no. Why don't we just talk about this as part of it?" It's not something to avoid. It's something you go through—and then you come out of it.

It would have been much easier for me to have held on to the hope that there was a light at the end of the tunnel and that I was just in the midst of a universal thing.

Q. We've talked a lot about how to share and be introspective, but you also emphasize the importance of listening. What makes your emphasis on listening unique is its role in sharing and connection—the give and take you're trying to help people create. How is listening a part of sharing, do you think, and how can we be better at it?

A. Listening is super important. I'm not advocating that anybody walk into a room and take up all the space to talk nonstop. Hopefully, when you're sharing, you're in a conversation with someone who also has stuff to share.

As an aside, I do think the call to listen can be used to silence women in particular. Some people use the idea of listening to make people feel not smart enough to speak about a topic or to share. We don't need to go too far into this point here, but it's important to be aware that this happens.

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For me, it took a lot of years of listening before I was willing to share. I read blogs for years before I started my own. I listened to podcasts for a long time before I started using my own voice to share. Listening helped me find my own voice. Listening informs a lot of how you share. We should be doing a healthy amount of both. Listen to people share their stories and be able to respond in kind or with empathy. Listen as a way to educate yourself—a way to broaden your worldview.

I feel like most people who read this book will have been listening to others for a long time, and while listening will always be important, the main goal of “Share Your Stuff. I’ll Go First.” is to help people who don’t know how to share.

Q. Every question and topic in this book isn’t hard—but some are. What is your advice for people who are afraid of the pain that may come when they try to answer some of these questions—perhaps questions they’ve avoided for a long time?

A. Again, I’m not a professional, but in the short term, talking about something really hard is emotional, painful, and vulnerable. In the long term, the bigger picture, talking about hard things drags them out into the light and makes them less scary. You gain freedom. When you share something hard with a trusted friend, ultimately, there is relief. When you’ve been carrying something for so long—trying to hide it or keep it a secret, it comes out in other ways, like our health, our relationships, or our temper. Not talking about it is not doing us the favor we think it is.

Q. This is a book that people can read in different ways. You could sit down and read the whole thing all the way through, or you could jump around. You could read it with friends, or you could read it alone. What is your advice on how people should sit with this book? How do you hope it’s read?

A. My purpose—my vision for it—is that the book is read with somebody else. I think this is an amazing buddy read, with a friend or with a group of friends. Everyone is going to take the questions and chapters differently, and one chapter that is heavy for someone will be light for someone else. You can share your stuff with each other as you’re reading through the questions and reading through the ways to think about the questions, and it won’t be the same exact exchange every time. It could also be a great book for married couples to read.

I guarantee you that your reading buddy will tell you something about them that you didn’t know. My husband, my sister, and my oldest friend recently read this book, and they all learned things about me they hadn’t known before.

Q. Why did you decide to not just write a memoir? Why include the questions, and by implicit extension, the reader?

A. I think I initially did want to write just a regular book about my life, but ultimately, that’s just not how I share. When I’m being myself, it comes out this other way—through this back and forth. I feel like this book is written in the way I actually talk, share, and communicate in general. You know, if you’re a hip hop dancer, why would you try to be in the ballet?

Q. Do you have a favorite story in the book, or is that impossible?

A. I wouldn’t call it a favorite—that does feel impossible—but I do have a story that stands out a bit. It’s kind of a mundane story, but it has had an enormous impact on my life. It’s in the chapter called “When Did It Change?” about my high school boyfriend, Chris. When we were young, we had an argument, he drove away, and I waited on the porch for him for hours and hours. There

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was nothing spectacular about the fight—it was just a 20-year-old’s lovers quarrel. But something about waiting on the porch for someone who never came back changed how I engage in romantic relationships for the rest of my life. I knew I’d never wait for anyone else like that again.

There is nothing monumental about this story. We had a fight. I waited for him. He didn’t come back. But for me, it was earth-shifting. I have other stories in the book that are much more original, interesting, even juicier. But this is the story that stands out.

I feel like this is true for a lot of people. A lot of us have stories we would never share. It feels silly—feels too hard to articulate why it matters to us so much. So, we just stopped sharing our stories. But when you asked me that question, that’s the story that came to mind. I want to give others permission to share those types of stories. Maybe they don’t seem to make a lot of sense—their impact, I mean. But we don’t really get to choose why that was the straw that broke the camel’s back, and honoring that—for ourselves and others—is progress.

About Laura Tremaine

Laura Tremaine is a writer, avid reader, and beloved podcaster. Laura grew up in a small town in southern Oklahoma and moved to Los Angeles site unseen when she was 22. Years of film and television production followed, and in 2007, she married the director she met on her first movie set. For six years, Laura regularly wrote at “[Hollywood Housewife](#),” a blog that opened doors of friendship and opportunity all over the world. Through blogging, Laura traveled to Sri Lanka, Haiti, Israel, and all over the United States writing and speaking. Eventually, she closed the Hollywood Housewife blog and moved toward podcasting. She was a regular co-host on the girlfriend chat show “[Sorta Awesome](#)” and is the creator and host of the topic-driven “[Smartest Person in the Room](#).” She launched a celebrated blog called “[10 Things To Tell You](#),” in 2019 and then its eponymous podcast the “[10 Things To Tell You Podcast](#),” shortly thereafter. Her first book, “Share Your Stuff. I’ll Go First.,” drops February 2, 2021. Laura lives in LA with her husband and two young children.

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