



**A Conversation with Meagan Francis and Sarah Powers  
Co-Hosts of The Mom Hour**

**Q. You're the co-hosts of The Mom Hour podcast, where you offer practical tips and real-life encouragement for moms who want to enjoy motherhood more. Tell me about why you're both so passionate about helping women navigate the complexities of motherhood.**

**Meagan Francis (MF):** Well, I think the biggest reason is that we're both moms! We've both been moms for a relatively long time now – almost 25 years for me. And 14 years for Sarah.

So, I think that since we've been through every phase, we know how hard it can be. We know it's easy to get caught in the "who-has-it-harder" Olympics and that competitive "life is difficult" trap, and I've been on both sides of that as a mom. In our role now of mentoring other moms, we can acknowledge that it's hard but offer some things moms can do to make it easier and more fun and satisfying. And we know those solutions are out there, and sometimes when you're really in the trenches, it's hard to see that. So, I think that's one of the big things we both share.

**Sarah Powers (SP):** I would agree with that. And I know that when I was a newer mom, I got so much validation and help, as well as humor, entertainment, and community from content creators who were addressing, as you say, the complexities of motherhood – the good and the hard at the same time. So, I think that's why it's meaningful for me and why I am passionate about that. I know firsthand that that type of content is what got me through the early years. It wasn't an image of perfection. It wasn't always expert advice. It was the content that tried to bring it all together by addressing the little things we can do to make this fulfilling and fun while acknowledging that it's hard.

**MF:** I agree. We aren't really the kind of parenting podcast that gives discipline advice, or can help you with your child's medical issue. But I do believe that to the extent moms are happy, fulfilled, and satisfied in their lives, and have good coping skills, then that is going to set the tone for a family life that is happy, fun, peaceful, calm, all those things. It really does trickle down. So we feel that by helping moms, we're helping families as well.

**Q. What makes The Mom Hour podcast different from other parenting podcasts out there?**

**SP:** What we have observed is that many parenting podcasts rely on what I'll call clinical expertise – featuring pediatricians, psychologists, child development experts, discipline experts, or sleep experts – either as the host of the podcast or as an interview-based show where those are the rotating guests. And on the other side of the spectrum you find motherhood podcasts that are very confessional, very personal, and often there's a celebrity or an influencer behind the mic. Both of these types of podcasts can be really well done, by the way. But somewhere in the middle is where we have found the ability to tackle tough, interesting, and nuanced topics, not as experts, but also not as *just* Meagan and Sarah. I think we have found a way to address topics broadly and inclusively, leaning on our personal storytelling but not making it just about us, while also including voices from our community who have different stories and perspectives. So, I guess what makes us different is that we strive always to find that spot where we're

conversational, fun and feel like your girlfriends or your older sisters, but we're elevating that conversation just a little bit while also not preaching.

**Q. You have eight children between the two of you. How does that help inform the topics that you choose for the show and the advice that you offer your listeners?**

**MF:** I think that because we have quite a few kids between us, and they span a large age range, it gives us a longer view and a lot of perspective about each of the phases and stages that we see moms going through, from pregnancy and postpartum to preschoolers, preteens and beyond. Since we've both been in it with our own kids for a while, we have context. We can look at something and say, "okay, are you parenting for today just to get through this day, or are you parenting for the long-haul relationship you want to have with your kids?" And because we've both done it now with multiple kids over multiple years, it just gives us more credibility because we know what that looks like. We have the line of sight where we've seen it play out with multiple kids. And that has given us both so many different parenting experiences that I think help us better understand our listeners and allow us to offer a more complete perspective.

**Q. As I'm sure you both know, comparison amongst moms and mom guilt are both very real. How do you address those issues for your listeners?**

**MF:** Yes, that's a big thing, and I think one of the things that we're always trying to do is get at the root of why a mom might feel guilty or like she's being judged or feels compelled to compare herself to others or feels others might be comparing themselves to her. And I think when we really get at the "why" of these decisions, we find sometimes it's not about what we thought it was at first. So maybe the guilt we're carrying or the judgment we're holding onto towards other moms, we're just turning back on ourselves, and that's not helping us. That's not getting us where we want to go as moms. And I think when you have that perspective, you can let it go.

But we try not to focus a ton on the hot button issues. We touch on many polarizing parenting issues, but you might not know what we think because we're always going to take it with this view of "what is best for your family" and "why did you come to that conclusion?" I think that really getting at the root of why you make choices as a mom helps you make better choices and then feel more confident. And then that guilt and comparison kind of fall by the wayside.

**Q. On the podcast you dedicate episodes to answering listener questions. What are some of the most asked questions you get from moms?**

**SP:** We always laugh that the most common question we get is from people who are on the fence about having a third kid or adding one more baby to their family. It's almost always going from two kids to three. And we laugh because I have three kids and Meagan has five, so obviously, we went for the third and then the fourth and the fifth, in Meagan's case!

Another common question has to do with starting a kindergartner at a slightly younger five-year-old or waiting a year. So again, it's one of those things where we can't give you what you need to answer that question for yourself, but we can validate that it's a common, tricky thing, and we can share what other families have thought about and done.

Both of those questions are never something we could have meaningful advice for in the traditional sense. We're not going to tell a listener what choice she should make. Still, we try to create a conversation that helps people ask themselves the questions or go to the experts they already have in their toolbox.

More broadly speaking, both of those questions speak to a common thread in our listener questions, which is moms are planners. They look ahead, and they are trying to do the right thing next year. And they're also trying to think about what life will be like in five and ten years. Some of that brings up questions about, "am I making the right decision for my family, or how will this decision impact my life

down the road?" And I think that's one of the most universal parts of being human. We don't know if the thing we're doing today is the right thing for down the road. And that wondering pops up in these very specific questions like should I have another baby and is my five-year-old ready for kindergarten?

**Q. What changes in motherhood have you noticed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020? Are there new aspects to mothering women are worried about, or different pieces of advice you find yourself offering to moms parenting through a global pandemic?**

**SP:** This is a really fascinating question and something Meagan and I have talked a lot about, so a couple of things come to mind. I have noticed that career decisions seem to be coming up more in the last two years. And we do talk about work and working motherhood quite a bit on our show. I have noticed, and we know statistically, that women and moms have left the workforce or changed how they're showing up in the workforce in droves over the last two years. So the kinds of things cropping up in our community are real tough questions about switching careers, scaling back, getting back into it, and what it looks like now. So, I would say that career worries have always been present in our audience, but I am noticing them more and maybe more emotionally since the pandemic.

The other point that comes to mind is that new moms especially really crave and benefit from the community – meeting other moms at library storytime, or going to a mommy-and-me class with your baby. It's kind of this right-of-passage that can be awkward. It doesn't always work. You don't always find your people, but there's a real universality in trying and in getting out there and awkwardly making mom friends. But that was taken away from many new parents in the pandemic. So, what we find is this lack of community or wondering if that's ever going to click into place.

However, Meagan often wisely points out when we talk about COVID and parenting that it's almost impossible to know whether this is a pandemic thing or whether you would've encountered this challenge anyway. So, when people ask us, "oh, my two-year-old isn't talking as much as I thought he would be," is it because everyone's wearing masks, or would this kid have been a little bit of a late talker anyway? Every family, including ours, is wondering what's pandemic-related and what would we have encountered anyway? I think those are interesting questions, and I think some things have come up more intensely in the last couple of years.

**Q. What is your key piece of advice for moms wanting to cut back on the worry and stress of motherhood so they can fully enjoy these precious years?**

**MF:** It's tough because I think it's very popular and easy to say, "do less" or "take it easy." But that's giving lip service. This idea that moms should be taking it easy on themselves and maybe doing less, what does that even really mean? For some moms doing more might feel good or for some moms going in hard on what is important to them and letting the rest go feels right. So, if there's one key piece of advice, I think it comes back to really understanding yourself and what matters to you as a mom and then translating that for your specific family. Even doing less can feel like a burden if, by doing less, you're leaving things undone that stress you out later. Or if that means you somehow must come up with the money to pay somebody else to do something that you don't even mind doing. It's just these phrases that get thrown around that don't mean a whole lot. And I think instead of "do less" or "take it easy on yourself," it should be, "who are you, and what do you want?" Once you figure that out, you can really zero in on the things that bring you happiness, joy, and satisfaction, and then let go of the rest. But you must understand yourself first.

**Q. The Mom Hour first launched in 2015. How has the show evolved since then? And how has the business of podcasting evolved since then?**

**SP:** We just celebrated seven years in March of 2022, which means our podcast is a second-grader, and in the world of podcasting, we've been around a long time. And there are through-lines when we go back to listen to early episodes. Our focus on there being more than one right way to parent, figuring out what's right for you, and developing that inner mom confidence hasn't changed!

But there are a couple of ways the show has evolved over time as well. We have added different types of episodes. The core of our show is a conversation between two moms, but we have added monthly expert interviews. Over the years, we have added a popular subseries called "More than Mom," which are episodes a couple of times a month where we talk about lifestyle topics outside of parenthood. That might be pop culture books, food, travel, those kinds of things that moms love to hear and talk about but don't directly relate to raising kids. We have also done several series over the years where we'll take a topic and dive in over a few specific episodes. So, as we have moved through the seven years, the evolution has focused on how we can continue to meet our audience where they are and continue to have fun in this business. Coming up with new ways to talk about essentially the same thing means that we're always evolving.

In terms of the business of podcasting, we have really been at the forefront of innovative ways to work with our brand partners from the very beginning. We've seen a lot of changes in podcast advertising and podcast sponsorships, creative ways to integrate brand messaging into audio content. And that's something that's been exciting to us from the beginning but has changed a lot just in the last few years.

**Q. Take us through your founder's story. How did this podcast come to be and what were your original goals and expectations?**

**MF:** I had to laugh when I was thinking about this one because the podcast was sort of an accident, and I would say we had no expectations, really. In the beginning, we came from a blogging background. Sarah and I had worked together on a blog that I had started around the time my youngest was born, and I was starting to want to wind that project down. Sarah and I work well together, so I wanted us to keep working on something, and I had been dabbling in podcasting. I'd had a podcast for a couple of years by that point that I was kind of on and off with and had this idea about growing it at the time into a network of podcasts. Sarah and I started The Mom Hour, and I think our original goal was just to do it consistently. Within the first year of us launching the show, I had gotten divorced, so my life completely changed. I was working outside the home full-time, and it really became this thing that we both showed up to week after week. We were consistent in publishing right from the beginning, which is unusual for fledgling podcasts, especially back then. It wasn't like it is now. It was very hobby-ish the way most people approached podcasting. So, we were consistent and regular with publishing.

At first, we didn't really have a lot of goals or expectations around monetizing or getting big sponsorships. Working with big sponsors sounded great, but it was not a big focus initially. In the beginning, it was helpful for me to get out of the way to allow Sarah to use her detail and organization brain to get systems in place without me trying to blow it all up and reinvent the wheel. And as time went on, we found an audience. People really connected with what we were saying - and we both really enjoyed it. We would get another year in and think, no, it turns out we still do have things to say about motherhood, and we want to keep going.

We had a business coach who said that he kind of thought the secret to our success was that we didn't want it that much. Not that we didn't care about the podcast, but we weren't super focused on monetary success, especially back in the beginning. And I do think there's something to that. We weren't nervous about it. We just wanted to make a quality show and show up for our audience week after week. Then by doing that, we grew the business side. It just kind of happened. It was a ton of work, but it happened because we showed up to have these conversations. Those two things happened in tandem without overthinking it too much or pushing and pulling too hard. It just has felt like a very natural evolution.

**SP:** I think there was a little secret sauce in our relationship, Meagan. You spoke to what I bring to the table in terms of detail and systems, but that only works when paired with a visionary and a creative and someone who has the idea to start podcasting before it was the thing to do.

I also think part of our founder's story is truly our friendship. We met on the internet and started working together in a friendly way, but we weren't friends first, and a lot of people are surprised by that because it's a common story to start a business or start a creative project with your friend. But we knew each other professionally and grew our friendship inside of our business. We are different in many ways and deeply

aligned in other ways, and we get a lot of compliments from fellow people in the industry and from our community that our friendship is something that people admire and aspire to. So, I think that's part of the secret sauce, too, just how we pair up.

**Q. What has your experience been like growing The Mom Hour into a top 10 podcast?**

**SP:** I would say it's been really fun. The first thing that comes to mind for me, as Meagan said, is that we didn't know what we didn't know when we started. So, our early growth was like a happy surprise. We very quickly realized that the world of podcasting had its own passionate devotees, people who had chosen consuming podcasts as the way they wanted to get information. And those people were passionate about the podcasts they listened to. So it was genuinely delightful for us to realize what kind of community we could build from a medium where we're not seeing people. We're not talking back and forth with them unless we move the conversation to social media or somewhere else. So I would say the experience has been truly fun.

As we have grown, we have stayed independent. It feels good to see our name on Top 10 lists, especially compared to podcasts produced by major media outlets or major celebrity brands or networks and conglomerates. We have chosen to stay independent and have a very small, very lean team, so it feels good to be side-by-side with some pretty big media operations. And to know that we've done that on our own and our community has been so supportive feels really good.

**Q. Walk us through the three most impactful lessons you've learned growing your business.**

**MF:** One thing I think we've done well is consistently deliver on the basics while also being open to change. We knew early on what people wanted to hear from us and which topics they came to us for again and again. And we knew that to grow the audience and keep them engaged, we had to keep delivering on those basics. That's what people came for, but to keep us engaged and keep new moms coming in or moms who've been around forever still listening, we also had to be open to change. We also had to evolve with an evolving industry. There have been many changes in podcasting over the past seven years. So those two things had to both be happening at the same time. We had to show up every week for our audience, our sponsors, and our brand partners and do the show. But we also always had to keep an eye on the horizon and be willing to see how things are evolving and what audiences are looking for.

I remember talking to someone early in the pandemic, I was going to be on her podcast as a guest, and she said something like, "I'm just really over the pandemic. I'm not going to go there on my show. I'm not going to talk about it." I was like, well, I don't know how we can go through a pandemic without talking about it. It seems like that's not acknowledging the reality of the world, right? So we had to show up for the new reality that our listeners were finding themselves, all while still doing the basic thing they had wanted us to do. And that's just a constant push-pull between consistent delivery and openness and evolution.

The second one would be that timing really matters. You have to be patient when needed, but then you have to move fast when warranted, and you have to know the difference. You have to know the difference between when an opportunity is still far out and when that opportunity is right in front of you. And of course, we've missed opportunities by not moving, and we've also sometimes jumped into things too early, and you learn that lesson. So timing matters, but you're not going to get it perfectly. So it's just a good thing to keep an eye on.

Lastly, if you're going to have a partnership, it really has to work. There have been so many times that I think Sarah and I would be miserable in this business if we had a partner that wasn't as good of a balance. Or who maybe didn't respect each other's personal lives to the same degree, creative vision, or needs to do things a certain way. We have very different personality types and the way Sarah needs to do something to feel good about her work at the end of the day is really different from what I need to do to feel good about my work at the end of the day. And you don't always have to share your partner's feelings on everything or even always understand them, but you have to respect it. So you can't be too careful if



you're going to go into a partnership with another person, and fortunately, we lucked into just the right partnership. I'm not sure we even knew how critical and crucial that would be when we started this.

**Q. What is your advice for other moms out there who are interested in growing their own business?**

**SP:** You know, the culture we live in holds up an image of a “girl boss” on Instagram that looks like a very specific type of entrepreneur. And I think it's a little bit tricky. On the one hand, it's really inspiring to see moms and women starting and growing businesses. Still, like everything else on the internet, my advice is to remember that it is a highlight reel and a curated presentation of what it's like to grow a business. It doesn't tell the whole story, and sometimes it sets unrealistic expectations for what it means to be a mom and a business owner.

Sometimes we're better at remembering this - that the image we see online isn't the whole picture - when it comes to the personal side, but with business, it can look like everybody's killing it. And I would remind moms that there are the women who are actually killing it in starting a business who might not even be posting on social media. Do you know why? Because they are head over desk getting stuff done. So my advice would be to find the business that you are going to be able to really show up to because it's fun and fulfilling and hopefully makes you a living every day, regardless of whether that looks glamorous on the outside.

**MF:** I would add something to that. And that's just that the content you consume around business these days can make it seem like everything is very fast-paced and that you'll see growth really fast or else just give up and move on to the next thing. And I think the magic in The Mom Hour has been how long we've been at it and how slow our growth has been, and how slow we've moved very intentionally. We've both had young families that we've been raising during this time. We've both had moves and other personal things that have not allowed us to go at a 65-hour a week pace. I don't know if we ever would be, but when we weren't interested in getting like a bunch of capital that we would then have to produce something for an investor right away, that was not the pace that we wanted. So it's been a slow, steady growth. And I don't think that gets told very often. But, again, it's something we give lip service to, “no one's an overnight success.” Yet you only ever think you see the overnight successes because you see them when they get successful enough for you to see them. So if it's something you're willing to put your head down and just work on at a pace that works for your family, whatever that looks like for you for the long haul, then I think you're just more likely to see success.

**Q. Lastly, what gets you excited to go to work on this podcast? Why do you do what you do?**

**SP:** Meagan and I have had fun together in this business from day one. Meagan spoke to the duality of sticking with something that works, showing up consistently, and being in an industry that's changing and offering new opportunities. And in a way, it mirrors our two personalities. Our partnership and friendship make it fun, and our community's support makes it feel worth doing.

**MF:** When we were last together in person, I sat down to write a little Instagram post about what we've been doing, and what bubbled up for me was that we are showing up again and again for these moms, and it really matters to us that what we say matters to them. I had a moment not too long ago where someone mentioned that her three-year-old son would come into the room and say, “oh, is that Meagan and Sarah?” And it really just hit home that we're literally coming into these moms' homes. Our voices play as a backdrop for their family lives and keep them company. Their kids know us, which is a big responsibility and honor.

Besides the fact that it's just fun to be with Sarah a couple of times a week and talk, and we talk all the time, we're always planning some new move for the business or something new that we're working on. That's so fun, but really at the end of the day, we could have fun doing a lot of things together. We could start multiple different kinds of businesses and enjoy that. But the fact that what we're talking about really matters to the moms who are giving us their time, granting us their time and a piece of family life, really

means something. And I think that really, at the end of the day, is what keeps us showing up for this specific business.

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