



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Episode #41: The Secret to Perseverance

Please note: This is an unedited transcript, provided as a courtesy, and reflects the actual conversation as closely as possible. Please forgive any typographical or grammatical errors.

- Martha Beck: [Intro Music] Welcome to Bewildered. I'm Martha Beck, here with Rowan Mangan. At this crazy moment in history a lot of people are feeling bewildered, but that actually may be a sign we're on track. Human culture teaches us to come to consensus, but nature — our own true nature — helps us come to our senses. Rowan and I believe that the best way to figure it all out is by going through bewilderment into be-wild-erment. That's why we're here. [Music fades] Hi, I'm Martha Beck!
- Rowan Mangan: And I'm Rowan Mangan. This is another episode of Bewildered, the podcast as we know for people who are trying to figure it out.
- Martha Beck: And Ro, what are you trying to figure out?
- Rowan Mangan: Marty this week, I am thinking as I so often do about our small child Lila. Lila is at a developmental phase right now where she's beginning to understand self other. Not everything is Lila. Some things aren't Lila. And in-
- Martha Beck: Wait, what? Go back.
- Rowan Mangan: I know, I know.
- Martha Beck: All things are Lila.
- Rowan Mangan: All things are Lila in a way, but in another way they're not. And so what it does to her is as she sees that other things aren't her, she also gets more of a sense of who she is in the world. And it's kind of interesting. She sometimes refers to herself in the third person as Yaya. She sometimes refers to herself in the first person with an Australian accent.
- Martha Beck: She also says some things in a British accent because of her favorite show. And so she calls sparkling water fizzy water. And as soon as she starts saying, "Bring us some fizzy water," we will know she has delusions of monarchy.
- Rowan Mangan: Fizzy, giving our child. Anyway, whatever. I just think it's ridiculous that she's got a taste for Perrier.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: If you've got to give your child a treat and your spouse, naming no names, doesn't believe in sugar, I don't believe in sugar either. Sugar doesn't even exist in my world. But you got to give the kid something. And fizzy water is not exactly a health crisis, is what I'm saying.
- Rowan Mangan: No, it's potentially like a crisis, a social crisis.
- Martha Beck: Like a social crisis. Yes. We can go it's not exactly Marxist. I'll grant you that.
- Rowan Mangan: Anyway, so a very cute thing happened, and that's my whole thing that I've brought to show and tell today, which is that Karen was walking up the stairs with Lila a few nights ago, and Lila was trying to carry things and she couldn't really carry and navigate the stairs. And at one point she burst out in some desperation, I think. "Oh, cuckoo. I'm so tiny."
- Martha Beck: Oh, poor tiny. Aren't we all tiny? Don't we all feel that way? I feel that way all the time. Who wrote that beautiful little couplet, "Oh Lord, your ocean is so big and my boat is so small?" Some French monk I think.
- Rowan Mangan: It's funny that your mind went to that, whereas my mind went to a bit that I think was from Spike Milligan maybe where he says, "As I lay there in the night looking out over the millions of stars and galaxies, it just made me reflect on how insignificant they are."
- Martha Beck: Everything is [inaudible 00:03:31].
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, so what are you trying to figure out, Marty?
- Martha Beck: Oh my gosh, I'm sorry. I'm trying not to be like of the past century or anything, but my electronic gadgets are scaring the life out of me. I believe that they have gone fully AI and are now conspiring against me. They are biting the hand that recharges them.
- Rowan Mangan: Say more.
- Martha Beck: Okay, so I'm in the car, which is plugged into my phone.
- Rowan Mangan: The car is plugged into your phone?
- Martha Beck: Yes, it is. My phone plugged into the car. The car plugged into the phone. Potato, potato. Hello.
- Rowan Mangan: All right, I'm with you.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: So it's plugged into my phone and my phone has Siri. And then I have a watch that is also linked that says things to me with Siri. Siri being the ultimate uber servant of all the peoples. So this is what I do when I have an idea for my book when I'm driving in the car. I send myself a text.
- Rowan Mangan: When I think about you, I text myself.
- Martha Beck: So this is what happened yesterday. I'm driving along in the car and I think of a really good thing to say in my book, like [inaudible 00:04:42]. And I say to myself, so I say to the car, "Hey Siri." And the car says, "Uh huh." And my watch a second later says, "uh huh." And I say, "Send a text to Martha Beck." Why are you showing me your phone right now?
- Rowan Mangan: Because Siri was listening to you telling the story.
- Martha Beck: I'm telling you, they're after me. Anyway, I say, "Send a text to Martha Beck," because I have learned in the past that saying, "Send me a text just makes Siri go "Who the hell are you?"
- Rowan Mangan: She goes, I don't know who you are. I don't know how to respond to that. I'm so tiny.
- Martha Beck: I was talking about some parenting crisis the other day, and my watch said, "I don't know how to respond to that."
- Rowan Mangan: And you said, you and me both, pall.
- Martha Beck: I did. And then it said, "Don't worry about it, Martha." So anyway, but that's another time. It's all part of the conspiracy. So I'm in the car, I say, send a text to Martha Beck. And what Siri says at that point is what do you want it to say? And then whatever I say, like [inaudible 00:05:50], she'll say, "Okay, your text to Martha Beck says, liberty jibit." Send it. And I said, yes. And she says, done. Okay. An easy relationship.
- Rowan Mangan: That's on the average day.
- Martha Beck: Servant, employer. Yeah, that's the typical thing. But now I've got two of them. My watch and my car both have Siri's.
- Rowan Mangan: But are they not a unitary consciousness?



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: I thought they were, but they're not. Because I say, send a text to Martha Beck. And the car says, "What do you want it to say?" And then my watch says, "Your text to Martha Beck says, what do you want it to say?" And then my car says, "Your text to Martha Beck says, your text to Martha Beck says, what do you want it to say?" And then my watch says, "Your text to Martha Beck says your text to Martha Beck says, your text to Martha Beck says, what do you want me to say?"
- Rowan Mangan: It was an auditory hall of mirrors.
- Martha Beck: It was an existential crisis. And I truly think, I was like, am I the only thing in the universe? Am I nothing? Are they everything? Who is God here? I have no idea. And so I just drove into a bush, ended it all.
- Rowan Mangan: What else could you have done, really, in that situation?
- Martha Beck: I haven't figured this out at all. I'm just sitting with it in meditation.
- Rowan Mangan: Someone told you once, I forget who, but someone told you if you're ever in a meeting or in any sort of situation where you don't know how to respond to someone and they ask you a question and you don't know, you have to say, "Thank you. I'll meditate on that and get back to you."
- Martha Beck: Oh, that is just so...
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, I completely agree with you.
- Martha Beck: I meditate, but not that way. It's like Eckhart Tolle talks about this man that came up to him and Eckhart said, "Where were you born?" And the man said, "I was never born." And Eckhart said, "Of course it's true. But when he said it, it wasn't true."
- Rowan Mangan: It's nice to know that the enlightened can also find pretentious people unbearably annoying.
- Martha Beck: I think that is part and parcel of enlightenment. But how would I know? I'm just still out there trying to send myself a text.
- Rowan Mangan: We'll be right back with more Bewildered. I have a favor to ask. You might not know this, but ratings and reviews are like gold in the podcasting universe. They get podcasts in front of more faces, more eyes, more ears. All the bits that you could have a podcast in front of, that's what they do.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

So it would help us enormously if you would consider going over to your favorite podcasting app, especially if it's Apple, and giving us a few stars, maybe even five, maybe even six if you can find a way to hack the system, I wouldn't complain. And a review would also be wonderful. We read them all and love them. So thank you very much in advance. Let's just go out there and bewilder the world.

- Martha Beck: So honestly, what's today's topic, Ro?
- Rowan Mangan: Honestly.
- Martha Beck: Honestly.
- Rowan Mangan: I will do my best to be honest about today's topic. Well, why don't I just tell you?
- Martha Beck: Were you going to be dishonest about today's topic?
- Rowan Mangan: I just didn't know how to lead into it. I didn't have any interstitial segue content.
- Martha Beck: Just say I've been meditating about this.
- Rowan Mangan: I've been meditating on today's topic, since I was born. Which I never was. Today on the Bewildered podcast, which is the podcast that we are on right at this very moment, you and I are going to be discussing the different ways that one travels in our lives between where we are and where we want to be.
- Martha Beck: So not in the car driving into bushes out of confusion, but traveling metaphorically through our life course.
- Rowan Mangan: That's right. Metaphorically. Yeah, what do you make of that?
- Martha Beck: Yes, I think that's a good topic because people keep asking me about it. It seems to be what everyone wants to know.
- Rowan Mangan: Everyone wants to know...
- Martha Beck: How to get from where we are to where we want to be in our lives. Nobody seems to have it. Everybody's asking.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I just realized how actually quite vague this topic is, but that's great. We're going to go somewhere specific with it. I know we are.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Of course we are. We're just going to drive until we end up in a spot. And that will be our specific.
- Rowan Mangan: If we get confused, we'll just send ourselves a text.
- Martha Beck: Now, seriously, it's about you set goals and you move toward them. And I have noticed that people often, including myself, often set goals and are certain that we're moving toward them at a crisp and unflagging pace. Only to look around and see that we've been in bed for two weeks.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh yeah. That's me.
- Martha Beck: The heat of the joy of the goal setting experience is not perpetuated indefinitely.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, that is so true. And well put.
- Martha Beck: Thank you.
- Rowan Mangan: So what does our culture say about this marching towards our goals?
- Martha Beck: Well, it says give it a good push. Set a goal, and then work toward it every day. Maybe put an app on your phone. It'll check it off if you do it. You're going to do it every day because there's an app and you said you would. And it'll just happen. And I don't think that it ever happens that way.
- Rowan Mangan: What Marty, is the one rep max?
- Martha Beck: One rep max is a man. He and I were together before I was gay. No, okay. So this is what the culture says about goals is that every day you should be able to do what in weightlifting terms would be called your one rep max or the most weight you can lift, the maximum weight you can lift just one time. So it's like if you watch the Olympics and they're lifting like 650 pounds. By the way, I had a friend who was an Olympian. They used to go to the weight lifting competitions to see who could record the loudest fart. That's something you didn't need to know, but now you do.
- Rowan Mangan: But also that sounds like a more interesting thing to do than just sit there and go, that looks heavy.
- Martha Beck: They weren't farting. The weightlifters were farting.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, I know. But what about the other people watching? They're just like, oh.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: They probably weren't farting as loudly, because when you heave 650 pounds above your head, your intestine has to be in on the festivities.
- Rowan Mangan: No, it doesn't.
- Martha Beck: Yes it does. It's like vroom, vroom. Well, that's my theory. Anyway, a one rep max is the most weight you can lift. And after you have lifted it just once you're like hamburger, you go staggering off. And then you blink in a code that says you wish to be bathed. And that's all you can do. Well, we take the one day when we are at maximum productivity and clean living and all of that, and we think, okay, well I'll just do that every day. It doesn't work like that, folks.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. And there's also something I think where the mood that you're in, like setting goals itself is quite a lot more fun than doing the work each day to meet the goal. Because when I'm setting goals, I'm looking into the middle distance, imagining myself being this shinier, more energetic, more consistent person than I am. And that's quite fun. So it's actually quite a creative lala, but I'll tell you what's not creative. Just incrementally doing shit every day.
- Martha Beck: Not for us. Maybe it's like our personality type or something, but zillions of people have asked me about life and they also have this problem. So, I think you're really right. And it's just how do we get ourselves to do it? We've been trying to do this, help each other do this forever.
- Rowan Mangan: We have a really fun thing that we do periodically where there'll be a morning and we'll notice that we're both in quite a sparky mood. And we'll realize that this is the perfect morning for a mode de vie conversation, and we'll start running around the house like exclaiming it's time for a new mode de vie.
- Martha Beck: New mode de vie, I got this phrase from a woman who was my land lady in Cambridge, Massachusetts like a thousand years ago. Madame Geechan. And Madame Geechan was always having a new mode de vie. And she would come wrap on the door and she would ask us to take some of her furniture off her hands. There was just all this furniture in the apartment we were renting from her because she was always redoing her mode de vie. She wanted to save the old furniture. And she just kept stuffing it into the apartment I was living in. So yeah, she'd knock on the door and she'd say, "I have decided on a new mode de vie," and we would have to deal with the fallout. But you and I took that phrase and we run with it.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I'd say we probably have a few moments of new mode de vie a year. Do you think that's fair?
- Martha Beck: Oh, I think we spark it up like once a month.
- Rowan Mangan: Sometimes. Maybe. I don't know.
- Martha Beck: But can I tell you the difficulty of this? Some days, and we're both in the new mode de vie. That means way of life, by the way, for anyone.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, mode of life.
- Martha Beck: Lifestyle, like pie mode de vie, or whatever. Apple pie mode de be. That's all a mode. Anyway, we get up, we're both sparking the mode de vie. It's like, yay, Rowy, let's do this and let's do that. And you're like, yes, yes. We dance around and Karen's like, what is the matter with you two?
- Rowan Mangan: And then we say, we have no idea.
- Martha Beck: We have no idea. And then like two weeks later, I'll get up and I'm like, mode de vie time. And I remember the day we danced about and I'm like, Rowy, let's do the mode de vie. And you'll come in and you're like, I was up with the baby the entire night. And the big sparkly mode de vie energy smashes heavily into your exhaustion.
- Rowan Mangan: So let's give the listeners a sense of what our mode de vie conversations consist of. So usually it's like because we both do different things that are not that quantifiable necessarily, we try to bring in the numbers. And I'm going to get up at 6:25 in the morning and I'm going to write 975 words because I found an app, we know how the culture loves apps, that calculates when I want to have my draft of my new book done and how many days between then and now. So it tells me, okay, you got to write 975 words a day between now and March 21st. And if you miss a single day, I'm going to recalculate. Recalculating. And so, it's that sort of thing. What time we're going to get up in our new mode de vie, how much we're going to achieve and produce.
- Martha Beck: You know the worst time for me to do this? When I have freaking jet lag. Because that's the only time that I just wake up at five as bright as a new penny. And I'm like, I'm a morning person.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: How compelling that is, like you do something once that works. And getting up early is a classic one for you. And it's just like, I guess this is what I'm like now. I'm like, who knew? I didn't used to be, but as based on the evidence of the last three hours, I am now for the rest of my life, I am a morning person.
- Martha Beck: I have arrived. I absolutely have arrived at what I wanted to be my entire life. That sucked. I'm so glad to be me finally.
- Rowan Mangan: Let's jam our mornings full of wonderful things.
- Martha Beck: It would be amazing. And then when it's gone, when you get up, you're like, who the f was that? What kind of asshole was that that committed me to this? I want to kill that person.
- Rowan Mangan: I'll help.
- Martha Beck: [inaudible 00:18:10]. Maybe when you're sparkly and I'm not.
- Rowan Mangan: Maybe we could find a really passive way to kill them, like poison.
- Martha Beck: Go back in time. And I say just-
- Rowan Mangan: I can't even be bothered to think about how we would do it. Logistics.
- Martha Beck: It's too hard. I couldn't commit murder on those bad days.
- Rowan Mangan: No. And if it was a good day, we'd probably do something like get some words written.
- Martha Beck: Spectacular. Get some words written and, no, we would never commit murder. We would never write pages. [inaudible 00:18:44].
- Rowan Mangan: So one of the things that occurred to me as we were talking, sort of starting to circle this topic a little bit, is there's a tool that you teach in your Wayfinder coach training, which is called the ideal day exercise. And so it's a kind of visioning exercise. In a way, what it's doing is uncovering what your dreams actually are and where the obstacles might be. So, it's a coaching tool. But what is really hard, and this is the one rep max thing, is it's called the ideal day exercise. But what Marty actually asks you to do when you are doing this imaginative thing is it's not actually your ideal day. What it is is you're imagining the most normal day in your ideal life. So nothing special's happening that day. And so it's not a pinnacle, but it's like, and so that's the thing with how many reps can you do every workout, rather than can you lift 650 pounds once.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: And you have to get, it's so interesting because if people have really sucked up the culture a lot when they did this exercise, because this is what they tell you every time. Sorry for all you who are having your ideal day creation modes stolen from you by this. They always say, "I wake up in a room with white walls full of, there are windows everywhere with white curtains blowing in the wind. And I'm in a white bed and I have a white peasant blouse on."
- Rowan Mangan: I seem to be on Santorini. The border outside is crystal blue and every building is painted white.
- Martha Beck: And I get out and I float in my peasant blouse and my peasant, I don't know, skirt even for men.
- Rowan Mangan: My peasant underwear.
- Martha Beck: I put on my white sandals and I drink a white coffee. This is a really, really bigoted sort of... Anyway, it's always blank, blank, blank. It's like blank paper. They haven't been taught how to dig in and find out what they actually want.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, actually it sounds like a brochure for a holiday, right?
- Martha Beck: Yeah. And it's just so blank.
- Rowan Mangan: And aren't there always sitting by the pool, sitting on the beach? There's only those sort of holiday images, sort of vacation images.
- Martha Beck: They're always on the damn beach. I'm sorry, on the wonderful beach. Because honest to God, how many people would just go to the beach every single day of their life, of their ideal life? Some people, yes, but these are people who've never even been to the beach. By day five, they'd be losing their minds. But the white sand is there. It's all blank.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. It's interesting, isn't it? It's like, what do we populate our dreams with? And it's like no wonder we're so obsessed with the numbers. I'm going to get up at 6:15 in the morning and write 975 words because we're focusing on the wrong bit. We're focusing on the journey and we've got no idea what the destination is. So it's got to be 975 because the future is blank, is blank flowing curtains.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Can I say something though? And I know I'm going to beat this one to death because it's the book I'm writing. But the left hemisphere is what we're thinking of when we sit down and calculate what we're going to do and when we use language. And it can't imagine for shit. All it knows how to do is count things and rank them and achieve them. But if you want something original, you have to actually let go of that way of thinking and sort of roam off into the imagination of the right hemisphere, which is not verbal and can't count.
- Rowan Mangan: Can I ask you about that? Because that's quite interesting. So, when I am in one of those mode de vie modes...
- Martha Beck: One of those mode modes.
- Rowan Mangan: Mode modes.
- Martha Beck: Mode mode a la mode, please. What would you like it to say?
- Rowan Mangan: Listen to me because I'm in serious danger of losing my train of thought. When I'm in a mode mode, you are saying I'm using my left hemisphere.
- Martha Beck: If you're counting like that, yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. So why does it feel creative which is the right hemisphere? Why does it feel so fun and juicy and creative?
- Martha Beck: The truth is, we're using our whole brains almost all the time.
- Rowan Mangan: Wow.
- Martha Beck: I know. It's a matter of dominance. You really can't see what the different hemispheres specialize in until somebody has brain damage, or now they can kind of see it on MRIs. But the deal is that you and I especially love to imagine things forward, more than a lot of people do. That's really where we live, is in the imagination of fabulous things that we will never get around to. Karen gets around to things, we just daydream. So what's happening is you're fetching ideas from the right side of the brain and then the left side goes, oh, I could count that. And they're like, oh, I count that. But then you slip into the right side and you say, I'm a machine, I'm a robot. I'm going to do 975 words every day like there is no... Just clockwork, that's me. And the right hemisphere, the brain is going I live in Marsland or whatever. I don't know how-
- Rowan Mangan: It came from the right hemisphere.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: ...how the muse speaks to me. That's just what came in. I'm so tiny.
- Rowan Mangan: I'm so tiny, Karen. So, I am always doing this thing. I think I've even talked about it on this podcast probably multiple times and I don't remember because that's also a part of my spacey personality. So I set up these really ambitious things. It's the funnest thing in the world to set up, to imagine myself being so productive and so wholesome as well. Because it always involves the right amount of exercise and the farmer's market and the stirring of the soup with the barley or whatever I've put in there.
- Martha Beck: That's what I love about you. I just look at you and go, oh man, she's so wholesome.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I'm pretty wholesome.
- Martha Beck: So yeah, sharing food, and yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I love it. And I'm more consistent in me having these sessions of dreaming up my future than I am in being able to enact what I've set up even a handful of times. I will more often have a goal setting session than I will actually do one increment of reaching the goal.
- Martha Beck: I did not say that. You said that. I have noticed it. And you know what you've noticed about me?
- Rowan Mangan: Many things.
- Martha Beck: I will get up and I will write my damn however many thousand words and I will do it by hook or by crook through hell and high water. I will get up and I will do it. I will write 1000 words and I say, "Ro, I wrote a thousand words even though I'm exhausted and I haven't slept past five for a week." And I'll say, "Listen to what I wrote," because I'm always doing that to you. Following you around the house. Listen to what I wrote, Ro. Listen to what I wrote.
- Rowan Mangan: You go, "Maybe I could just read you a few pages."
- Martha Beck: No, listen to what I wrote. What do you want it to say? And so I read the thousand pages and Ro just looks at me and she goes, "Okay." Because it is her way of trying to gently break it to me that I have written complete dog's breakfast, horrible outpours.
- Rowan Mangan: You have to know that what Martha Beck, Queen of Integrity just said is a dirty, filthy lie. You heard it here first. That is a lie.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: How so, Rowan Mangan? Shut your wet mouth. Sorry.
- Rowan Mangan: You never write crap, honey.
- Martha Beck: I do. It's not like it's published, people know, I can't deny it.
- Rowan Mangan: Well this is subjective and I never say those things to you, nor do I think that.
- Martha Beck: Yeah you just say, "Okay."
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah, I do say that.
- Martha Beck: Maybe you could try giving this character, I don't know, a storyline. Maybe you could in that paragraph make a point.
- Rowan Mangan: I think I say things like, mm-hmm. No, it's good.
- Martha Beck: Like that. Oh God. And the most terrifying thing is that when Rowan really loves something that I've written, she gets this deep angry scowl and I'm like, oh, oh. And I'm reading faster and faster trying to make it sound entertaining. And she goes, I get to the end and I'm ready and I'm braced for it. And she goes, "Marty, that is the best thing you've ever written."
- Rowan Mangan: That's how I enjoy things, okay. I don't waste any of my enjoyment energy on, oh, does my face look happy? What's the point of that? I'm busy enjoying.
- Martha Beck: It gives me heart failure. I just want to warn everyone about something related, which is if you go to South Africa, be very, very gentle when you're getting feedback because a South African will pause for a long moment when they totally agree with you and then say, "No, you're right." No, that's an Australian. How do I do a South African? No, you're right. I don't know how they talk.
- Rowan Mangan: No, you've lost it. And I'm not going to try because it's just...
- Martha Beck: No, you're right mate. I can do Australia because it's right here in the room with me.
- Rowan Mangan: It is in the room.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Anyway, yeah. So that's what I do. I try to get my mode de vie going, and then I just drag myself along meeting the quota, the various quotas of my new mode de vie until I completely flame out, create terrible work and generally end up either having surgery or having a month long convalescence from some illness.
- Rowan Mangan: The other thing that you do, and this is often more true when you're writing really, really well, is you'll do three times as much as you planned to, but nothing else that was intended. And so a lot of other things fall by the wayside.
- Martha Beck: Oh yeah.
- Rowan Mangan: But books get written, honey. They get written.
- Martha Beck: Emails do not get written.
- Rowan Mangan: No emails don't, no.
- Martha Beck: All of y'all waiting for my email response, I'm so sorry. I have ADD and I am hyper focused.
- Rowan Mangan: But all of those waiting for the next book, we've got good news for you.
- Martha Beck: You've got great news in like a year and a half. It's a slow [inaudible 00:29:41].
- Rowan Mangan: So Marty, how do we figure all this out?
- Martha Beck: I'm going to tell you exactly how to figure this out in a minute.
- Rowan Mangan: All right. How do we figure it out?
- Martha Beck: Okay, so the first thing is, I'm going to get didactic again.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh boy.
- Martha Beck: Every single one of us has what's called a negativity bias.
- Rowan Mangan: I don't.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: I do not. You're always saying things like that. Now because the brain evolved to keep us safe, I've said this a million times, but I'll say it again. If you're in a room with a bunch of puppies and one cobra, you're going to pay attention to the cobra and not the puppies. The cobra will be biting the puppies. It's a horrible scenario. My brain is taking me there because of my negativity bias. It naturally says, but what could happen? What could go wrong? And when you get into a negative space, things are a lot more burdensome and a lot more frightening. And if you don't have a ton of energy to blast through your inherent negativity bias which we all have, you're going to sort of grind to a halt.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I feel like I just did. I mean, I'm still stuck on the cobra and the puppies.
- Martha Beck: Right. That's exactly the thing. You get stuck on the cobra and the puppies. Don't look at your phone because the first doom scroll thing you see is going to suck the life out of your mode de vie.
- Rowan Mangan: And the algorithm will just hand you more doom. Every time you look at some doom, there's more doom.
- Martha Beck: It's incredibly heavy actually. We live so burdened by negative information from all over the place. Because the media of course is biased the same way our brains are biased. If it bleeds, it leads.
- Rowan Mangan: It's made out of brains.
- Martha Beck: The whole internet is just made out of chopped brains. They just keep feeding us into it.
- Rowan Mangan: So the point about the negativity bias is that even when we are doing good things, some good things, if they're not at the lofty point of the mode de vie that we imagined, our negativity bias will pull us into, well, it's stupid. What's the point of it? I only wrote 971 words.
- Martha Beck: That's where you always go. Mine is everybody's dying in some foreign country. Why am I alive? I must stop trying. We have different versions of how we get weighed down into modes of activity that aren't the mode de vie we have planned. And I agree, when we see that we're not going to make that ultimate target, we're not going to do our very best, a lot of people just give up.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. And that sounds eerily familiar.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: It's interesting because reading the parenting stuff, we like to talk about anybody who's told, oh, you're super smart and you get everything right, is actually in a very, very precarious situation. If you're told you work really hard, so keep at it, you're going to be able to go on through failure.

Rowan Mangan: The studies about this are phenomenally clear, because if something becomes hard, if your brain's mathematics says trying will get me there, you will persist. And if your brain says I guess I'm not smart anymore, or this is harder than my smartness reaches, so there is no sense of persistence. That's been a huge thing for me.

Martha Beck: And the brutal irony of this is that the negativity attacks your talents first and foremost because that's what people have told you you're naturally good at. So I never wanted to be a writer. I never thought I was good at it. My sister was the writer. She's way more talented than I am. I was just a grind when it came to writing. I wanted to be an artist, visual artist. And then my hands wouldn't work for a couple of decades and whatnot. And I was just like, I guess I'll try writing books. I can dictate into a computer.

Rowan Mangan: And now Siri wants to kill you.

Martha Beck: Those two things are not unconnected. But it's so brutal that the very thing they tell you you're good at, the day you can't be good at it, your entire confidence gets shattered. Whereas some little grunt who's just been working their hardest and trying and failing and trying and failing, which is the only thing I've ever done as a writer, is getting it to happen.

Rowan Mangan: Oh, that's fascinating. So the more you think you're bad at something, the better you'll do.

Martha Beck: Pretty much. And if people have told you you're good at something, give up.

Rowan Mangan: All right. So how do we use this information? We've got a goal. I've still got the goal of drafting my novel or whatever.

Martha Beck: Well, the first thing is make sure your goal is not just like a hallucination.

Rowan Mangan: That's the only thing a goal can ever really be because it doesn't exist yet. So you can only see it.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Martha Beck: Yeah. Okay. So a preconfiguration of the goal, but you've got to feel a real charge for it. If it's something that you've been culturally pressured to do, they used to tell me I should have a radio show at Harpo Studios. And I even got auditioned and my throat closed completely when I did my auditions to the point where they're like, "You cannot do radio."
- Rowan Mangan: Look at you now, kid.
- Martha Beck: It's because I really, really didn't in my heart want to make a radio show. That wasn't right for me. And my body crashes on me to stop me because I will go toward a goal if I set it. So set a goal that really resonates with your whole self. Sorry, I'm always getting preachy. I need to set goals that really resonate with my true self to begin with. And then you sort of mosy toward them. You just plan to mosy. Not like, I will not rest until I've done this every day for six months. It's like, I'll try it and I'll like poke it once a day. And then accept that you're not even going to do that consistently. You're going to start, you're going to stop. You're going to start, you're going to stop. And if you stop and think that means I should never start again or it's too late.
- Rowan Mangan: That's really interesting. So that needs to be sort of built into the goal setting somehow. Oh, you know what this reminds me of? So I went to see, I have a shoulder thing and I don't even know how to describe, it's a shoulder thing.
- Martha Beck: It hurts.
- Rowan Mangan: It hurts.
- Martha Beck: It's not like a fetish.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh, shoulder fetishes. That would be funny. All right. And I went to the doctor about a shoulder specialist and this is what he told me. He said, "Okay, so I know exactly what's going on," which was amazing. And then he said, "Okay, here are the exercises. Here's a piece of paper. Here are the exercises that you need to do every day to make this pain go away. Now let me tell you what's going to happen from here. You're in a lot of pain. So you're going to do the exercises. The exercises are going to work. The pain will go away. You'll immediately stop doing the exercises because there's no pain. Then the pain will come back. The pain will bother you. You'll start doing the exercises again. This is what the rest of your life is going to look like, Rowan. Please give me a hundred dollars."
- Martha Beck: Oh, a hundred? He was worth twice that, because that is great freaking advice-



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: Isn't that cool?
- Martha Beck: ...for everything that we will ever do.
- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. I found it very liberating because it was like he knew me.
- Martha Beck: He knew you. Yeah. It's probably how he got through med school. That's awesome. And you know what? That's exactly what you've done.
- Rowan Mangan: It's amazing though, just sort of side note, how much pain I have to be in before I will do a selection of very simple exercises.
- Martha Beck: Would you hand me that glass of water? My shoulder. Have you done your exercises? It's not bad enough yet.
- Rowan Mangan: Has to be bad.
- Martha Beck: That's a commentary on how hard it is to move every day toward a goal.
- Rowan Mangan: Oh my God, that's such a good point.
- Martha Beck: It's not even you're driving an animal like a horse. It's like you're driving a wombat or I don't know, maybe like a snake or something that you really can't control. It just goes sort of where it wants. But you still have to get it to go to the goal.
- Rowan Mangan: That's true. Oh, I just went into nine different metaphors about what we could be driving. So we actually, it's funny because as I think about this, I realize that I actually have known this enough about myself, that there's certain scaffolds that I've put in place around myself sometimes, although I do always forget them. But remember how we got into this thing where I would say you don't have to write your book every day, but you have to touch your book. And that can mean reading over what you wrote yesterday, just opening the damn document and touch it in some way. Let your eyes touch a sentence from it. And it's that sort of thing where you're trying to lead the horse to water. Because you go in there and then sometimes you'll be like, oh, I might just tinker a little bit while I'm in there. And that's how you trick yourself into actually doing. But of course if touching is the daily goal, then you kind of outsmart your own negativity bias because all I said was I was going to touch it, I didn't say 975.
- Martha Beck: That's right. You're just going to kick the fly wheel once, and keep it moving.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: And so then that's a way of getting around that negativity bias problem.
- Martha Beck: That's really good. And then there's this thing we thought of the other day, and I think this is when we decided we would do this particular topic. We decided that we could nourish our new mode de vie on a daily basis.
- Rowan Mangan: This is true. And I feel just as you say that, I feel suddenly inspired creative, and I want to do it like to the max. I am going to nourish this mode de vie so hard every single day.
- Martha Beck: One rep max, I'm going to be so nourished, my mode de vie is going to be chuck full of nourishment.
- Rowan Mangan: How do we nourish our mode de vie, Marty?
- Martha Beck: Well, I think it's about always being free to go to the fun place and dream about it. So you're not just saying, okay, 975 words, asshole. You're saying, ah, imagine how it will be when I've got the brilliant ending that I haven't thought of yet. And imagine how we'll have champagne when I've finished this. So you feed the joyful fantasies.
- Rowan Mangan: So you're nourishing the fantasy of the goal, not just the steps. You're not just nourishing the steps, you're nourishing the goal.
- Martha Beck: Yeah, you bring in more puppies, man, you bring in more puppies. And then the snake [inaudible 00:40:42]. Snake comes up and you're like get out of here. Because we can tell each other no, no, no. Not with the negativity, not with the glue yourself to the grindstone. This is our chance to just fantasize about how fabulous life is going to be when we've done the things. And it's fun.
- Rowan Mangan: And that does give you fuel.
- Martha Beck: Especially when you're talking to another person. I could never do this on my own, it occurs to me. So I'm thinking if the folks out there are listening, you probably need a mode de vie nourishment buddy of some kind.
- Rowan Mangan: Actually I would beg to differ because I've done this in my morning pages so consistently.
- Martha Beck: Morning pages are three pages of free handwriting every morning. Julia Cameron.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

- Rowan Mangan: Yeah. So just writing first thing in the morning, and I can keep myself well bucked up, but first I've got to get up early enough to do the morning pages.
- Martha Beck: That's right. Doing your daily pages is part of your mode de vie that you then drop.
- Rowan Mangan: That I sometimes drop, but it's cool to think about it as getting back on the horse is something that we have to continuously do. You don't just fall off once, get back on, and then you're there. You will fall off, get back on [inaudible 00:41:55].
- Martha Beck: And speaking of horses, I remember when I used to do horse work with people as coaching, and there was this one guy who was always pushing the horse to learn something. And then as soon as the horse learned it, he would push it to learn the next thing. And he never stopped to give the horse positive reinforcement. Give it a rest, let it breathe, rub its neck, tell it was a good horse, whatever. And I realized, oh, it's not just about the goal in front of us, it's about remembering and celebrating what you've done so far, even if it's little.
- Rowan Mangan: Celebrating steps.
- Martha Beck: I did open the document yesterday. I did change one sentence. That's good.
- Rowan Mangan: Good for me.
- Martha Beck: And if I didn't, I'm going to be kind about that because you're never going to get any animal, a horse or your own body or anything, to do what you want if you just punish it and drive it.
- Rowan Mangan: That's a really good point, Marty.
- Martha Beck: Celebrate every single step forward, even if it's tiny. Give yourself congratulations and love.
- Rowan Mangan: We're going to feed those goals every day like a little animal. I love it.
- Martha Beck: So it kind of boils down to set your intentions, visualize your goals, but then be prepared to change them, hold them really lightly, and really nourish yourself along the way because that's the only kind of mode de vie you really want.
- Rowan Mangan: I love that, Marty. I feel like this is going to be my new mode de vie.



BEWILDERED

WITH MARTHA BECK
AND ROWAN MANGAN

Martha Beck: Oh, I'm so tiny. You're so tiny. We're all so tiny. So stay wild.

Rowan Mangan: We hope you're enjoying Bewildered. If you're in the USA and want to be notified when a new episode comes out, text the word, WILD, to 570-873-0144. We're also on Instagram. Our handle is @bewilderedpodcast. You can follow us to get updates, hear funny snippets and outtakes, and chat with other fans of the show.

Bewildered is produced by Scott Forster with support from the brilliant team at MBI. And remember, if you're having fun, please rate and review and stay wild.