

**A conversation with Jen Hatmaker,
Author of *Of Mess and Moxie: Wrangling Delight Out of
This Wild and Glorious Life***

Q: You have a way of opening up to your readers and sharing your struggles *and* celebrations in a relatable way. OF MESS AND MOXIE is no different. Where did the concept for your new book come from?

A: The original concept for MOXIE, was born out of a recent season of incredible pain in my family. We weathered a couple of years together that were full of suffering, unexpected pains, things we didn't see coming, illness and a lot of heartache in our kids' lives – it came all at once like a tsunami. And we found ourselves in a place where we were like, "Not one more thing can happen. We are at max capacity here."

So, having very recently walked through not only that suffering but the *recovery*, was really the basis of OF MESS AND MOXIE. Life is sincerely hard – marriage is hard, parenting is hard. And these universal struggles are not indicators that we are doing it wrong. We've mostly lived out those stories in private. We kept this tucked away in and dealt with it close in and tight with our friends and family. So now we are walking through that process of recovery and finding our legs again – something we thought may never happen.

So, OF MESS AND MOXIE is the first time I've talked about it and it's really personal to me, now, to take my readers by the hand and say, "We can do this." "You can do this."

Q: In the first few pages – the introduction – you channel your inner Martina McBride and explain who can relate to OF MESS AND MOXIE. So, who is this book for?

A: Yes, so in the intro I did a riff of Martina's "This One's For the Girls" – an anthem for every woman in every stage of life. And that is what I hope OF MESS AND MOXIE is to my readers.

OF MESS AND MOXIE is for the girl in her 20's. She's launching into adulthood and launching into her career. She's fresh, young, bright and her dreams are new. They are starting their adult story. I have so many things to tell them. This life is not a contest and it's not a race. You have gifts to offer, you have a seat at the table, and we are cheering you on

OF MESS AND MOXIE is for some of us in the middle – that's me included – in

our thirties and forties. We are hustling. We are raising babies and developing careers. We are in the trenches of marriage. And we are in the middle of it all, yet we still have these dreams. Some of them are realized and some of them are not. Life is really busy and everything feels crowded, but now is not the time to throw in the towel. Now is the time to keep our foot on the gas and really grow into the women God created us to be.

And then I am thinking about the women ahead of me. The generation before us. They've mentored us and guided us. They've laid a lot of pavement for us and now we are walking on it. I love them and admire them. And we still need them – we need their leadership and their gifts.

When I think about who OF MESS AND MOXIE is for, it's the girls. This one's for the girls. All of us. No matter where we are entering the conversation, no matter what mess you've been served up, no matter what battle you have overcome or are still in the middle of.

Q: Speaking of that, you write about overcoming adversity and pain and how we can stay faithful during that process. Can you talk about your experience with this?

A: I've learned that no matter what, we can and will move on.

The tragedy or pain could be the worst thing in your life – the one thing that you think, "Anything but that, God. I can handle anything but that." And I am here to tell you, that thing can happen. You can protect against it and guard against it and it still may. And I am also here to tell you that you will still live. You can rise up. And somehow, God will take those tattered threads and make something new and beautiful.

Ultimately, I hope the message of OF MESS AND MOXIE is one of hope, one of resilience and one of faith. Because God can see us through anything.

Q: And a part of moving on is forgiving others, right?

A: Very true. Anne Lamott is one of my absolute favorite writers – she calls Earth "forgiveness school." It is so true. Pretty much, the Earth provides me every day with the opportunity to forgive someone.

You know what else does that? The internet. The internet is a dumpster fire. So, every single day, we get this invitation. You can either forgive or go to battle. You have the opportunity to live in a space of anger and bitterness or resentment. Or you have the opportunity to live in a space of forgiveness.

And I know this is a really complicated topic. There is not just one version of forgiveness because there is not just one version of pain and offense. Some people have been harmed in ways that are so detrimental that forgiveness cannot look like reconciliation. It's one-sided.

But one thing that I know from having lived 42 years is that forgiveness is absolutely the path to freedom. It may not be a path to relational healing – sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't. But for that one person – forgiveness is the key that turns the lock to that prison. It's freedom.

Q: Another message you share with readers is “You don't have to be who you once were.” Why was this important for you to share?

A: When I first sat at my desk to prepare to write MOXIE, I sat there still, quiet and prayerful. And I asked, “What is the first thing I want to say right out of the gate, to all these readers that I love so much?”

I had this clear and instant idea: You don't have to be who you once were.

And I mean that in the most freeing and liberating way. I can speak to this personally. I've been through several iterations of who I am. I have evolved and adapted. It's easy to get caught up in who we once were. Whether the past involves a lot of pain, abuse or suffering, here's a feeling that I'll never get past this, I'll never break through this. And it's just not true. We don't have to be a victim. We don't have to be our worst day, our worst season, our worst decision. There is always tomorrow. It can always be new.

Q: While a lot of the topics like the ones above are deep, personal and emotional, readers will also find your classic humor in topics like Netflix

A: Okay, women work hard. They do. We are smart. We have careers. We are good neighbors and good parents. We do a lot of dishes. We deserve a prize now and then.

My prize is Netflix.

My first dip into a Netflix binge was Downtown Abbey. One Christmas break, my daughter and I sat down in front of the television under blankets, we ate food, we drank our tea, and we watched every single episode.

Meanwhile, the boys in our house – it was like Lord of the Flies. I don't know what they ate, I don't know what they were doing. I didn't care. And I love Brandon Hatmaker. We've been married for 26 years. But Netflix is my soulmate.

I am just saying, there is a place in a busy life for a Netflix binge.

Q: Speaking of prizes and rewarding yourself, in the book you talk about the importance of self-care. Tell us about what you call the doldrums and how you make self-care a priority.

A: Not too long ago, I experienced this season of what I call the doldrums. It's not even as serious as depression or anxiety. It's just a season of blah. Everything feels dark. Everything feels murky. You've lost motivation to do the things you're supposed to be doing. It feels like everyone is against you and everything is doomed. I call that the doldrums and I get stuck in it. Everything is ruined and I will never get out for the rest of my life.

And, we know that's not a good way to live. It's not real. You're just in a funk.

One thing that I've learned about the doldrums is it takes time to get out of them. If you live for two or three months in that space, it may take two or three months to get out of it. If it 1200 lazy decisions to get to that place, then you have to grab a shovel and start digging.

My way out of the doldrums is always pretty normal. I want a quick fix. Something pizzazz-y. A miracle, really. But actually what it looks like is boring, old work. I walk through in OF MESS AND MOXIE my basic steps.

I hope if readers are in this place – they don't like anything, they don't like anyone they live with, they don't like their friends – I hope they know there is a way out of the darkness into the sunshine. And, I am here to help.

Q: You spoke earlier about the recent life experiences that inspired your writing. How was your faith important during that process of recovery?

A: One common theme throughout OF MESS AND MOXIE is one of my own personal, recent sorrow, struggles and heartaches - just some waters Brandon and I never expected to navigate and weren't prepared for.

So, while I was writing, it occurred to me that the great banner over my life right now is this idea that life, in any number of ways, can unravel. No matter how diligent you are, how much work you've put in, no matter how well you guard against it, or how faithful you think you've been. Life can simply and in front of your eyes, unravel.

It can be so disorienting. But what I've learned in my own life and seen thousands of times in other's lives is that it doesn't matter how many of those

threads that come undone, God can weave it back together. Stronger than before. Better than new. Every single time.

After all this, when I was trying to figure out how to finish *OF MESS AND MOXIE*, I wanted to remind readers that whatever threads are cracked in their lives, whether it's by evil, heartache, sin, brokenness – God can reweave it.

Q: What do you hope readers take away from *OF MESS AND MOXIE*?

A: This time around, I wanted to write the kind of book I like to read. I love when an author, in one book, can make me think, make me cry, make me laugh, entertain me, give me great ideas, give me a gentle shove where I may need it. *OF MESS AND MOXIE* dives deep into quite a few topics that we all, as women, care about. So, I hope that the book is meaningful. I hope that it is funny. I hope readers close the last page and they are sorry it's over.

And, I hope when readers finish the book, they felt seen, heard, known, and empowered. I hope they feel absolutely not alone and feel we are better together.

The most important message of the book – whatever a woman comes to the table with, whatever is broken in her life, stealing her joy, hurting her people – that just means her story is not over. There is just more to do. It can all be reweaved. And it will be better than new.

That work, that mess, that overcoming – that's our moxie. And I am living proof.

About Jen Hatmaker

Jen Hatmaker is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller “For the Love” and the forthcoming *OF MESS AND MOXIE: WRANGLING DELIGHT OUT OF THIS WILD AND GLORIOUS LIFE*, out August 8, 2017. Jen is the happy hostess of a tightly knit online community and top podcast, “For The Love with Jen Hatmaker,” where she reaches millions of people each week. She and her husband, Brandon, founded the Legacy Collective, a new kind of giving community focused on partnering, pioneering, and funding sustainable solutions to systemic social issues, which granted more than a million dollars in its first year. They also starred in the popular series “My Big Family Renovation” on HGTV. Jen is a mom to five, a sought-after speaker, and a delighted resident of Austin, Texas, where she and her family are helping keep Austin weird. For more information, visit jenhatmaker.com.