

Chris Velardi:

It's a 'Cuse Conversation with award-winning podcaster and author, Stacey Simms, a 1993 Syracuse University graduate who's been sharing stories, advice, and news about diabetes on her Diabetes Connections Podcast, through her blog, and in now, two books highlighting her, we'll call them adventures as the world's worst diabetes mom.

Stacey Simms:

And I got into an argument with somebody online about how I raise my son, which I can't believe how sometimes these arguments go on social media. I don't engage in them anymore, but back then I was. So he said, "You're really going to hurt your son." He was really nasty about it. And I said, "I must be the world's worst diabetes mom." I slammed the computer down and then I went, "Oh, that's it. That is it."

Chris Velardi:

You'll hear more about Stacey's approach to raising a son with diabetes and how she's found professional success as a trusted voice in this space. Stacey also shares some strong thoughts about the business of broadcasting, including some very pointed advice for young women in the industry. Stacey spent several years in television news and talk radio. She also talks about her lifelong connection to Syracuse University and the relationships that she's made with the people she met at the university. But we started our conversation with the interesting career evolution that's led her to where she is.

Stacey Simms:

It really is interesting to think about and look back on. And thanks so much, Chris, for this opportunity to come and talk to you and share these stories. I'm excited about looking back, although I'm a little nervous about looking back.

Chris Velardi:

Well, looking back to the easy part. Looking back, you know what happened there. There's no twist and turns. There's no [inaudible 00:01:41] twisting and turning.

Stacey Simms:

No, that's true. That's why we enjoy nostalgia. So just to answer your question, I won't go rehash the whole thing to start, but I was working in radio. I had what I considered my dream job, doing mornings in Charlotte, being part of a very successful morning show team. And then a lot happened, as happens to people in radio, that was unsettling. We were sold a billion times. I worked at WBT, in Charlotte, and the last people we were sold to while I was there, paid an enormous amount of money for us right before the crash of 2008. And then they were left with a very niche couple of radio stations that they knew they could never sell for the amount of money that they paid. So it became a game of cost cutting across the board, even more so than radio had been for many of us who'd been in the field for many, many years, and for many reasons, which I'm happy to share.

I decided to leave. I decided to leave on my own account. I was very tired of getting up at 2:30 in the morning. I had done that for television in the past too, as an anchor, and I wasn't quite sure what to do though. I just knew it was right for me and for my family. I had a daughter in middle school, who I was trying to stay up with. I was trying to stay up until 10:00 at night. It was very difficult, things like that. And so, when I was taking some time for myself, I listened to a lot of podcasts. This was in 2011, 2012, 2013 when podcasts were around certainly, but they were not as popular as they are and they weren't

native on your phone. I'd love to talk more about how podcasts got more popular, but you had to download them, you had to put them on your iPod, obviously that's where podcasts come from.

And I would do that. I would download lots of podcasts and walk my dog and listen to podcasts. My son



that blog had many, many,

Chris Velardi:

If they could figure it out, I'm sure it could be there.

Stacey Simms:

Okay, yeah, that's fine. Listen to Diabetes Connections wherever you get your podcast. But he got an insulin pump six months later, but he got a continuous glucose monitor seven years later. And this is the stuff you see in commercials, it's in people's arms. You don't have to poke your finger anymore. That actually has changed the game in an incredible way. I don't get so much feedback like, "You're a bad mom", but I do get, "Well, it's different now." And so, the second book actually has a lot to say about that, because it is different now.

And these are great tools, but we need to use them in ways to help our kids really thrive. The second book also is a little bit more, "I think you should do it this way or don't do this." Because one of the things on, and I'll just spend a little bit of time on this, one of the trends I think is horrible is, there's a lot of pictures now. We all post pictures of our kids. Some of us are more judicious than others, but there's this trend in diabetes, and without, of posting what I call, pictures of children in distress, "Oh no, my child is sick today. Here's a photo."

And it seems like this is common sense to post this, because I want your sympathy. I want your help. Those likes make us feel really good. Studies show it releases the same kind of serotonin that we get when we eat something yummy or we hit a great hand in Black Jack, brains giving you those feel good things. So that's one of the chapters is, all about sharing those photos in the hospital and when your child is sick and why you really can't leave a... And you can't leave an electronic healthcare trail either these days. Got to be really careful.

Chris Velardi:

Interesting. I am curious, obviously your son is very centric to this whole thing. How does he feel about-

Stacey Simms:

He thinks it's the greatest thing. He's fabulous. He's very open. I do approve everything. My daughter, who's three years older, we approve everything together. I don't share every story. It looks like we are very open. We are to an extent, but I'm very private about certain things, very careful not to name his poor healthcare providers who are fantastic. They don't get real names in the book. That's none of anybody's business. We don't share specific numbers. And I am careful. I'm probably not as careful as I think I am. But he's terrific and he's very open. He comes on the podcast every once in a while, and I'm told that younger people, like teenagers and kids to listen to that. I'm always mortified, because I'm like, "Tell people you do it right." He's like, "Well, I forgot to do this and I forgot to do that. It was fine." And I'm like, "No, tell him I'm a good mom." So it's funny.

Chris Velardi:

It's transparency, it's authenticity. We like those things.

Stacey Simms:

Authenticity, yes.

Chris Velardi:

Those things are important. All right, so let's go back a little further. Let's go back to your Syracuse story. As we talked about, your career started in traditional broadcasting, in television, and then in radio. Was that always the thing for you? Was that always the big dream and is that what drew you to Syracuse?

Stacey Simms:

Yeah, I was one of those kids. I grew up in suburban New York City. Well, I grew up outside of New York City, so West Chester County, which is 30 minutes north, my dad went into Manhattan all the time. So he worked in Manhattan. And I don't know why that came out a little garbled. My goodness, I grew up in suburban New York, outside of New York City, let's put it that way. And I listened to Howard Stern and Don Imus, because that's who was on the radio at the time. And my parents, they didn't care, "Whatever you want to listen to is fine." And I just thought, that's the greatest. I'm going to grow up and be Charles McCord or Robin Quivers, the sidekicks, the news readers. That's what I wanted to do. I just thought they were brilliant. I really enjoyed them, especially Charles McCord was such a big influence on me. And kind of weird as I'm looking back, for a young woman to think that way, but that's what I wanted to do.

Chris Velardi:

And I know I can hear our Midwest and West coast audience is saying, "Oh, this New Yorker, it's all the East Coast bias, whatever." But look, I grew up in Connecticut. And so, I also listened to Imus, and McCord was the news straight man, had the funny line that just because he was always the straight man, delivered it in a way that it was funnier, it worked. So I get that. I can relate, obviously. I had that similar experience as a child too.

Stacey Simms:

Yeah. I think the difference for me too was, we also listened to a lot of the FM stations and they all had the same kind of morning show, two guys and a girl. And the girl was always laughing and giggling, the giggle girl, and she was a secondary character. And I knew I didn't want to do that. That was really imprinted on me. So in middle school, our middle school, I have no idea how this happened. I think it was just a question that we had the space, we had the "TV station" for our community college. Now this was in the early '80s, so this was amazing. We had TV cameras in the middle school. And if you got to school early, you could take the high school bus in and get to school an hour early and you could fool around the studio. They gave us once or twice a week, they gave the middle schoolers a chance to, thank God there's no video evidence of any of this, but we got to do newscasts.

And I just immediately fell in love with that. So when I got to high school, there wasn't a TV studio or radio station, but I wrote for my school paper and I knew that's what I wanted to do. So of course everybody said, "Go to Syracuse, go to Syracuse." So I said, "Oh, hell. I'll go to Syracuse." I was thinking of majoring in policy studies and I actually got a scholarship from Maxwell. I got an academic scholarship from the other school. So I was a dual major for a little while. I actually was a dual major at graduation. I'm sorry, Maxwell, I totally abandoned you. I did not pay attention. I did not do as well in those classes, because once I got to Newhouse, it was all over. I just loved it. And I went to Z89, I went to UUTV, I went to the Daily Orange, all in the first week. Citrus TV now, I guess is what it's called.

Chris Velardi:

Citrus, yeah.

Stacey Simms:

Sorry, yes. But I went to all three in the first week and I was like, "Well, I'm going to do them all." And of course you can't do them all right. And I did a little bit of the news at Z89, but I found, which is so funny because that's where my alumni love is now. But I didn't like it. I found that, I felt like the giggle girl. I did





It's funny, if you had asked me 10 years ago to answer that question, I think I would've had a very different answer. The lens that I now look back on my entire career in broadcasting is tinted, I was almost going to say tainted. I don't think that's the right word, but it is tinted by knowing so much more and

aren't happening at work, that you're protecting yourself. And that's unfortunate to say, and I hope it happens less. This was in the early '90s. It never even occurred to me to tell people. I don't want to be... Nothing criminal, but uncomfortable. I'm 20 years old and comments about my looks. Can you put my microphone on for me? Creepy stuff that now, you would say, "Are you nuts? Back off."

But at the time, I don't think we even realized, at least I didn't how to manage through those situations. I knew that it was creepy and I knew I didn't want to be alone with him or him. And if the newsroom was deserted, I was going to take a lap around the building and hope somebody from Y94 was there. And I'm laughing as I'm talking about it, but it is a serious topic. And I have, I've looked back on a lot of my career like that. It's really been eye-opening.

Chris Velardi:

It's a serious topic that, as you mentioned, in the early '90s, was happening but not being talked about. Do you feel like, looking at the industry now, it is being talked about more than it was? Should it be talked about more? If you were to give advice to a young woman entering the field, would you look at some of what you experienced and say, "Just be aware of this, watch out for this?"

Stacey Simms:

Yeah, I-

Chris Velardi:

Or do you feel, maybe there's more awareness of it because of what we've seen happen in the industry?

Stacey Simms:



And you've mentioned it already, so many of us are reinventing ourselves, leaving broadcasting and trying other things and knowing that, while we joke around it like, "Oh, we're so old." And that we have a long way to go and a lot more to do. And I think that having those friendships and those people sharing in those experiences, we're doing things that, if you had told us when we were 19. We'd be like, "No, no. I'm going to be in television forever. I'm always going to be a reporter. I'm going to be a radio show host until I'm 110 and won't leave the microphone." But the industry has changed a lot. And that's another topic for other time. I think that's really unfortunate. But when we have these kinds of connections where we can talk about the changes and the things we want to do in different industries we're all in, I think that's pretty cool too.

Chris Velardi:

Yeah, without a doubt. It's such a powerful thing, and you're right, you don't think about it when you're 19. You're thinking about what's next, what's next? But you're not thinking about the people who are around you now, who really can be around you throughout that entire journey, which it's a pretty powerful thing. And it's special, you don't want to take it for granted. So let's look forward. We've done a lot of looking back. You've mentioned one book is out, the podcast is going strong and another book's on the horizon. So tell us where we can find these things in the world.

Stacey Simms:

Well, the easiest place to go is probably diabetes-connections.com. That's the website that has all my stuff recently. I'm on social media as Stacey Simms, S T A C E Y S I M M S. And I've got some other stuff coming up next year for the diabetes community. I got to be honest with you, Chris, every year I say, "Am I going to keep doing this podcast? How much longer am I going to do this podcast for?" Because it's been seven years and I think I'm good for another year, at least. At least I will be when I start selling my sponsorships next month. So I've got to stick around

Chris Velardi:

When the sponsors expect to be able to get out there in the world, yeah.

Stacey Simms:

Right. And you can't sell your sponsorships in January of the year you want them and you've got to start early. I think it'll be fun to see what's next, because I'm not quite sure. My kids daughter is in college. My son will be a senior in high school, this fall. So it's like, "Well, what do I do next?" I did 10 years in TV, 10 years in radio. I'm on... Well, coming up in year eight in podcasting. I'm thinking of doing something new. I just have to figure out what it is. So I'm interested to see what happens next too.

Chris Velardi:

It's exciting, right?

Stacey Simms:

It is.

Chris Velardi:

And because you've done the reinvention thing to a large degree, does that give you a little more confidence in wherever this journey goes next?

