

Building Legacy Through Conversation with Jason Brown

Introduction and Guest Welcome

Candace Dellacona: Hello everyone. Welcome to the Sandwich Generation Survival Guide. I am your host, Candace Dellacona. I am so glad to welcome today Jason Brown, who is a legacy strategist, an entrepreneur, single dad, straight out of Texas. I am so thrilled to welcome you here, Jason. Thank you so much for joining me.

Jason Brown: Absolutely. Thank you. And just so I don't have all the Texas people coming and going crazy on me. I am from California, but I am here residing in Texas. This has become my new place of home. 'Cause you know, these Texans, man, they will go crazy if you claim their, I haven't, I don't think I've been here long enough.

Candace Dellacona: Well, I'm just gonna say off the bat, once they hear your story and hear what you're about, I think Texas is gonna wanna claim you for its own. So that is my bet and that's why you are on the podcast today. And we're gonna talk all things legacy. We're gonna talk about how you got here, surviving the sandwich generation and all that good stuff.

Jason Brown's Early Life and Entrepreneurial Journey

Candace Dellacona: I wanted to just start from the beginning, Jason, for you to share a little bit with me of who you are and how you got here. And I'm so excited to talk about the Legacy card deck series. You and I have had a couple of conversations now about your mission and what you are set forth to do with this entire endeavor.

But let's start at the beginning. So tell us who is Jason?

Jason Brown: So Jason Brown is definitely a god-fearing man, first and foremost, husband, a father, entrepreneur, and someone who cares deeply about providing knowledge and information that can help build bridges and break cycles through information. I think that in this culture, in the society that we live in now, there is a lot of noise

Candace Dellacona: Yeah,

Jason Brown: there's a lot of information those informations don't actually help build the necessary bridges that you need to get from one side to the other.

Candace Dellacona: I think that's so true. So tell everyone where you started and how you got here. So you're native of California?

Jason Brown: sure. So I'm a native of California and I will just give the brief overview. My story in life in itself is a book, but so kicked out of the house at 16 and I had a child on the way, which is my daughter who is 23 now. at that time I was expelled from school, and I was trying to figure out life at that point. During that time, obviously me and my mom and our relationship just wasn't best, which is funny. I actually called her two days ago and I was like, I understand and I forgive you. I don't condone the methods, but trust me when I say I understand.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah. Yeah.

Jason Brown: what? I was like, just know I understand. But during that time both of my parents were both entrepreneurs. My dad owned restaurants and I like to say in Los Angeles, he had the first food delivery service ever. I used to ride around with him through LA and he had a van and he would deliver, meat and frozen seafood to people's houses, and we would go and get out and talk to his customers and hang out there all day.

And then my mom, was entrepreneur as well, started off in Mary Kay in Avon, and then she went off to in insurance and ended up building three brokerages and selling those insurance agencies which she still has her book of business and still does some work today.

Candace Dellacona: Wow.

Jason Brown: So growing up seeing that, that was the only thing that I knew. And I spent my twenties actually in television and fashion in Los Angeles. started off designing clothes, and then I transitioned into television. And then I got to a point where I'm just burnt out from the entertainment industry. I want to make a change. I was like, but I'm too far in. I've already gone too far. And I'm now knowing my life hasn't even started yet. but I ended up making a change into tech.

Meeting His Wife and Starting a Family

Jason Brown: during that time, I met my best friend. And I remember, I always like to say we had literally the notebook story. She worked for my cousin who was a publicist. at that time when I met her, the first time I met her, I said, I'm gonna marry her. And two years later we got married. And during that time we got married and she was like, I'll go wherever you want to go.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: was like I wanna start this business. And it was the business, which is still today, it's called Pocket Chefs, and it's a tech business in the Bay Area. we actually do meal prep and batch cooking for households that have 2.5 people or more. So the main focus was moms and pregnant women that were looking to get assistance with everyday cooking needs. And we moved to the Bay Area and we started that business. And as we were just having the conversation, the first three months we spent, just working on that. And we were living out of our car and we were living in Airbnbs. as I was saying, those were some of the best and joyful moments of my life.

I think that that gave me the opportunity to really connect and really learn learn each other and grow with each other. fast forward to 10 years, we, my wife, she started off at Sephora and then ended up going from Sephora to Tacha and then she got poached by a consulting firm in the Bay Area and then went to eBay. then from eBay, during that time, during the pandemic, we actually left and moved to Mexico. we moved to Mexico and we lived in Mexico for about five months. And that was my first time ever spending anywhere outside of the country. So we were there for Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, new Year's, eve.

Candace Dellacona: So you're newly married and you're making it as a founder, having that entrepreneurial spirit, obviously it's something that was modeled for you by your parents and you've taken it on and made it your own, and you've forged the way with your life partner, your wife.

Jason Brown: yeah, it was , she was my missing link.

Candace Dellacona: Mm.

Jason Brown: She was my missing link for sure. And the man that she made me into wasn't because of the things that she taught me, or it wasn't because of the things that she did. It was because of my love that I had for her. It made me want to be better as a man.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: So I had to do the work to be able to show up in a way that I wish, obviously the man that I am today is the person that she always saw. But I couldn't have done anything that I've done without her.

A Life-Changing Diagnosis

Candace Dellacona: And so that's a good transition to talk about what happened next and what ended up being a transformative moment in your life and losing her.

Jason Brown: sure. Yeah. So once we got back from Mexico, we had relocated here to Texas and we started to buy property out here and we bought our first home, but we were building that one. So as we were building that one, we had another investment property that we were living in. then 2022 New Year's Eve, we got the keys to our house and we moved in and celebrated New Year's Eve in our brand new house.

Candace Dellacona: Amazing

Jason Brown: Maybe six months into that, she got a job offer. She was actually hesitant to go. But she got a job offer from Nike and they wanted her to be the senior director of creative operations for Jordan.

Candace Dellacona: Amazing.

Jason Brown: She was 34 years old. And I just told her, you deserve this and this is something that I think would be great for you. So we left to Portland and we lived in the house it took two years to build and we lived in it for six months. And then went to Portland. And as we were in Portland, as I was getting stuff together at that house, 'cause we're gonna rent it out, I show up and she said, Hey, guess what? I'm pregnant. And I said, well, great. no, I was actually thrilled.

So in 2023, our son was born April 3rd. And it was great. We had the baby shower, everything was fine. I remember on the porch, on New Year's Eve and we were celebrating and in 2023 in April, I remember we were sitting on the couch and we were watching Star Wars. And the baby was in between us and we had our little EarPods in the, so we didn't wake 'em up we were like, normal night, gonna get up, go to sleep went to sleep. And we woke up that morning and she was like, I just, I have a headache. I was like, okay.

So we called the midwife and she was like maybe you're dehydrated. And she's yeah, I just have a headache. And I was like, you know what, let's just go to the emergency room. So I have the baby downstairs in another part of the house.

And as I'm bringing the baby upstairs, her aunt was staying with us at that time, and she's walking her downstairs and as she gets to like this middle platform, she just falls into a seizure. And we don't know what's going on. Hand the baby to my aunt and I catch her as she's falling down. And then I call 9 1 1. We end up taking her to the emergency room, we call the doula. And the doula was like, maybe it could be preeclampsia. Maybe she's dehydrated.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: they are running test on her and then comes back and they do CAT scans. And then they say, we found a mass on the right side of her brain, and it could be scar tissue from the seizure.

We're not sure, but we're gonna, take it to the cancer association and see what they say about it. So that was two weeks after, and then they finally came back and said, okay, we can confirm that it is a tumor we need to operate next week. So she went into brain surgery and came out and, we talked to the doctor and he was like, we're just gonna have to watch it over the next, few years and you may have to have another to resect it and just to go in and cut it out. And we were like, not a problem. And he was like, it's a grade four cancer. But we removed 99% of it and she was doing everything fine. And so we were going on a trip for Mother's Day and we went to the oncologist that day. And when we showed up to the oncologist, she was like I don't know if they discussed this with you. And we were like, you could say whatever, we've talked to the doctor, say whatever. She's in the notes they upgraded it from a grade four to glioblastoma. And we were like, what does that mean? She was like, it's the highest grade tumor and you have pretty much 18 to 24 months to live.

Candace Dellacona: What a devastating blow. So you're the high of, high, hitting crazy what we call success, right? In this country where you've made a go of your company and she is sought after as this incredible creative force. She's now been brought into this incredible company to do her thing, and you're have your first child, you're over the moon and your son is healthy, and you are walloped with a diagnosis that in the end is terminal.

And so where do you go from there, Jason?

Jason Brown: So as I said, and as I stated before, we are both believers and we walk with God. And she is really a different, like when I tell you a warrior woman, she is a warrior woman. we just started walking it out and having to figure out what this looks like for us.

And we weren't sure and we were praying. And I remember when she went into her second brain surgery I was like, okay, we were actually gonna go to Mexico to a cancer center out there that they deal with peptides and it's like a immunotherapy type of treatment that they do during that time.

And I remember the treatment was like \$40,000 and she just, she will research the flip the world over and research. She was like, I'm sure. I just felt unsettled. And I remember I was sitting there and she gets a call from her boss who is the vp and she was like hey because the president of Nike called her boss and was like, Hey, we just wanna make sure that she's getting the best help that she's getting. And she was like, did you connect her with, and I forgot the gentleman's name, but he was one of the VPs at United. So he connected us with him. We had a great conversation and he was like, listen, I have a friend at Duke and his name is Dr. Friedman and he's the head at the Brain Cancer center over at Duke. I would just love for you guys to have a conversation with him and he connected us, and we had a conversation with him and he was like, listen, I would love to have you if you guys would love to come. And this was in North Carolina. And so we actually flew down and went to dinner with him and his wife, and we talked with them, and we felt like that was the right move to go. And when I tell you like, it doesn't matter what came up, he was like, no, we can fix it. And that's why she loved him is because always spoke from solutions.

And at that time we got there and going through treatment and even the tumor started to shrink and we came back and there was a point where she started to lose mobility in her left side. she became completely paralyzed from her left side down. So at this point in time, I'm taking care of my son who is seven months, years old, and I'm taking care of my wife, who's completely paralyzed. She's, I'm having to take her to the bathroom, I'm having to change his diaper. And this is like every two hours. I'm going back and forth with

Candace Dellacona: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Jason Brown: And then a couple months in it, he's like, we just need to figure out, we can reverse it. And we woke up one morning and we were laying in the bed and I could tell she was tired. And we just started playing a worship song and my son was there and she was there and then got her up, took her into the living room and I was looking at her I can kind of see her about to go. 'cause at this point I can tell when she was gonna go into a seizure. So I immediately called, 'cause I had said her name, but she didn't respond. And then she started looking off to the left. So I called 9 1 1 and they came and then I called the medical assistant. 'cause I couldn't get ahold of Dr. Freeman at that time. And she was like, this seems like a different type of seizure you should take her in. And so we took her in and I'm thinking, she's had seizures before this is gonna be, and I was like, sweetheart, I was like, if you can hear me, like blink, and she would blink and I was like, I love you and I was like, you're gonna be okay. And we took her in and come to find out there was hemorrhaging in her brain. They, finally got Dr. Freeman on the phone and that was the first time where he was like, there's nothing more that I can do at this point.

Candace Dellacona: So up until that time, you were both optimistic and I just wanna point out, I don't know if you noticed this, but often when you speak about your wife, you're talking about her in the present sense, which I think probably speaks to the fact that you feel that she's still with you. I think that's really, really beautiful. I don't know if you realize you're doing that.

Jason Brown: I don't she changed, she changed my life.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: she changed. And I tell people, like the person that I am today and the people like they see today as, as a, the businessman and the father she changed my life and she loved me unconditionally. And she was the first time that I've ever felt unconditional love actually looked like. It felt

Candace Dellacona: yeah.

Jason Brown: so that's why, for me, when I get a chance to talk about her, it makes me, it does help settle my spirit because I get to share how amazing, she was. But yeah, that's when he had said, there's nothing more that we can do. We'll try one more time to try to reverse the bleeding. then they finally came back and were like there's nothing else that we're, we can't stop the bleeding.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: then seven days later she was gone.

Candace Dellacona: And you go through all of that as a young person, like I said, feeling like you're on top of the world. You're both, otherwise healthy. You're left as a single dad without your best friend and your partner and essentially the inspiration for all of this.

Navigating Grief and Finding Purpose

Candace Dellacona: And how do you get to where you are today in finding what your purpose is as a legacy strategist? Where did that start?

Jason Brown: So during the time, actually when I was in, and this was back in Mexico, was like, you know what? The first chef that I ever hired, who's now my business partner, who runs, excuse me, she's an operator. She operates the day-to-day for the business now. I was like, if I can't make you into me, I'm just gonna shut the business down 'cause I don't want to be an operator anymore.

Like I, my heart was being pulled into other areas, which was just doing a deep dive in financial literacy.

Candace Dellacona: Right.

Jason Brown: That's where my passion became. and I started to dive really deep into truly understanding all of the aspects of financial literacy, from securities to real estate, to life insurance.

And each one is its own different vertical. Even to the point where I went and got my real estate license, just 'cause I wanted to understand how it actually truly worked. And at that point when that happened, I had different businesses, we had built a portfolio, so I was managing everything on my own. But in that moment, I realized, as I was going through that season, there were a lot of conversations that we had and then there were a lot of conversations that we didn't have. And it's not the fact that I didn't know the answers to 'em because I understood who my partner was. We just didn't really have those conversations.

We had the conversations about life insurance and we had the conversations about, we didn't have conversations about do not resuscitate orders. Like we didn't have conversations about what do you want your funeral to look like or What would you want at your funeral? Everything that was done is because I knew she always called herself a butterfly and she was going through her metamorphosis stage. So I had like a, like 500, like little butterflies and like envelopes that were released and I had flowers, bouquets of butterflies on her and, but we never talked about, did you wanna be buried in la? Did you wanna be buried in, Texas? Do you care of where you're buried? And then, when it came to, if something was to happen to both of us, we didn't talk about power of attorneys.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: We knew who we would want to raise our kids, but we didn't really talk about or put things in place, if something was to happen. So there were so many conversations about things that we have explicitly, but we had generally.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah,

Jason Brown: So I understood

Candace Dellacona: sure.

Jason Brown: how to navigate those situations and I realized at that point I was like, when it comes to financial literacy, like I am very comprehensive when it comes to understanding from different verticals, especially understanding from life insurance.

'cause my mom from business to even investing in the whole nine. I realized if I know all of this and there's still conversations that I didn't have, I can only imagine what conversations are not being had with people who don't have the full domain knowledge in these verticals.

Candace Dellacona: yeah, so let's talk about that . And you said so much there as it relates to your ideas about living and dying and having these conversations. So starting with that, when you love someone, whether it's your spouse and your life partner, the mother of your child, or a parent or a sibling, and you're trying to be optimistic for the outcome and you're trying to follow along with that optimism, it's really hard to start a conversation about where you wanna be buried.

If you are rooting for them, and you are saying to them, I believe that this doctor is gonna fix you. And the hope and the competence that you had at that in that doctor at Duke, that he could somehow overcome glioblastoma. So I totally understand why you couldn't have that specific conversation, and I'm sure many of our listeners do too.

I've been in that situation myself. So knowing that you wanna be optimistic and you don't even wanna go there, it makes sense to me why you wouldn't have a conversation about where someone's remains would be, or the send off they wanna have. And then, dovetailing it with financial literacy and talking about what would happen next.

Again, all in the lines of you're not here anymore when you're trying to be optimistic. Those are really hard conversations to start. And that is what I love so much about your message, Jason, and why you and I connected when we had these conversations about Legacy and starting the conversation. Because part of the reason why I started this podcast is the platform, right?

To provide community and answers for questions that I know people have and resources like yours.

Creating the Legacy Card Deck

Candace Dellacona: So I wanna jump into like how the Legacy Deck came out of that. So why don't you talk about making the transition from, you have a super successful business and you are struck with, I'm sure, unimaginable, grief, love for your son, all of the things that could have been, and then you try to take that pain and that grief and put it into this project, which has become the legacy deck.

Jason Brown: sure. Yeah. I think that, and even just to close out that last part we were just talking about. You're right. It is very difficult to have those conversations, but necessary versus difficult are two different things.

Candace Dellacona: Totally right.

Jason Brown: And I get that it was difficult, but was necessary. And there was somebody that I interviewed on my podcast and she was in the military and we connected and I was like, oh, I need to actually talk with you is because she said it her, she's my platoon sergeant says, 10 outta 10 people die. And I was like, you're right. I was talking with somebody and I said the same thing. And I said 10 outta 10 people die.

And everybody plans. It's just what do we plan? And I've seen my father passed away. My grandma passed away and my wife passed away. I've seen the chaos happen my mother and my aunt because of the lack of conversations that they didn't have, even with my mom being in the insurance business.

And then I've seen the lack of conversations that when my dad passed away, I didn't know anything about anything. And then I wanted to change that when I got married, I wanted to have different type of conversations. I remember I was sitting there and I was sitting in the chair and I was like, there has to be a way to make these conversations a lot more lighthearted. And there wasn't anything that was out there that I had

in my hands to help me have these conversations. 'cause these conversations, I should have been having these conversations with her family, because we were okay. the chaos didn't really come within my family and with me and her because we were very clear and they understood our structure and how we did things. But I turned into Public Enemy number one in that hospital. And of course I get it, everybody processes things differently, but they didn't have tools to process or tools to have these conversations about the things that needed to be put in place. And I started to go down this path of, how can we make this easier for people to have these conversations? Because what happens is when we have these conversations, we feel like we're being attacked, or a family member feels like they're being attacked. But if there was a way to have the conversation where everybody's answering the same question and everybody's having the same conversation, then it relieves ability to say why are you asking me that question?

I'm not asking you the que, I'm asking everybody that we're all answering the same question. And that's where I decided to really sit down and together a tool called The When What If Happens Legacy Card Deck. And this card deck was designed to help people have end of life preparation conversations with ease, less chaos, and with structure. Because the conversation never stops. It will always be had and it will always be evolving, but having the tools to at least start the conversation, I can guarantee you that there's more chaos that happens at funerals, for some reason people think that's the time to have the conversation.

Candace Dellacona: I agree.

Jason Brown: But I understand.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah, I do. And it's the worst time,

Jason Brown: yeah,

Candace Dellacona: right? Because when somebody is gone and you're grieving, you are never your best self.

Jason Brown: sure.

Candace Dellacona: You just never are. And let's talk a little bit about not having something tangible. That's a really important visual, Jason, where you're sitting there thinking about what tool you could provide to other families to talk about legacy, to talk about long-term care and money and love, and all of the things that are wrapped up in one's life and their role in a family.

And so you come out with the When What If Happens, and this series, which is really remarkable. Truly. I've been in this business 23 years. I talk about death, dying, and disability all day long. I think about it, I think about these things all day long. And I think I shared with you, you were kind enough to send me a deck of the cards after we met the first time.

And I brought the cards to a pub here in New York City when I met up with my husband for a cocktail and a night out. And it was a really, lighthearted night out. But I'll tell you, we looked at these cards all night. And I just wanna share with the listeners how much care and the structure, the infrastructure that you put into the cards and give our listeners a visual about what it is.

So it's an actual deck of cards, guys. And what Jason came up with are these categories. Categories are so important. He starts with the icebreakers, the getting started, and then the subcategories cover things like money and medical decisions and your final wishes and legacy. So let's talk about that, Jason, like how you came up with the categories and the questions and where you sought input from.

That also was like a thought that I had and I was like, gosh, where did he come up with that question? So tell us a little bit about the actual production of these cards and how you came up with each of those topics and where you sought advice from.

Jason Brown: The funny thing is I didn't actually seek advice from anyone because as I was doing the research also, like I realized that as a widowed man at my age, I'm in a very small percentage of men

Candace Dellacona: Yeah. Yeah,

Jason Brown: in this world.

Candace Dellacona: Sure.

Jason Brown: And when it came to the actual questions of what I actually came up with, as you know, 99% of people have not even had these conversations.

Candace Dellacona: So true.

Jason Brown: So the questions that I actually came up with are topics and questions that me and my wife would have on a regular basis. We talked about legacy, where we talked about finances. Before we got married, we both took a, it's called Prosperity 101, and her name is Peggy Buck. And she does this financial workshop where this was before we both got married.

We actually put in and learned how to actually manage and budget our finances. And when it came to what type of legacy do we wanna live? And she always talked about how she wanted her dad to be remembered and how his legacy was important to her. So as I started to talk about and come up with these questions, these were things that I said, if money wasn't the benefactor of creating your legacy, what kind of conversations or what topics do you need to have in order to lay the foundation? Because oftentimes what happens is without having the conversation about how you want your legacy to actually be framed, if you don't write your legacy, somebody else is gonna write it for you. When it came to the financial side of it, we were very open about what our expectations were for our son and even when it came to our resources and when it came to investments, like we talked through those things regularly because it was just something that was super important for them.

Candace Dellacona: But you recognize that it's rare to have these in-depth conversations. It's so admirable that the two of you endeavored to take those things on at such a young age together, but I think the vast majority of the people don't, which is why your cards are so important, because you two figured out a way through your connection to have these conversations.

But I wanna give our listeners kind of an example of some of these questions that I found really, really helpful. And so within the subcategories, in terms of your deck the love and legacy cards are really interesting. And I think one of the questions that I love and how you frame it for the card is What's your most sacred memory of this family?

And I think why that question was so interesting to me is because when a family is talking about the most sacred memory. Sometimes we can have a different answer. Often we do. And so hearing from our family members what was important and what was sacred to them within the family can give new meaning to situations maybe that you hadn't thought of in that way.

And the way that you frame these cards is, you ask the question and then the follow up on the bottom is Why this matters, Why this matters. Because it brings reverence and clarity to the emotional history. And so all of these cards provide you with these really provocative questions and an opportunity and a platform.

To go back to your point before Jason, when somebody would say, why are you asking that? Why are you asking that question? That's why.

Jason Brown: So I believe that that's why when it comes to those prompts that you're talking about, it's important to give context to the questions that are being asked, because oftentimes without the actual knowledge of how this is framed, and it translates into legacy, we just think that these questions are attacking us because we don't know the answers to 'em. And that's why it was important to put those prompts so you can understand the context of why the question is being asked and why this question actually matters.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah, it's providing like the spirit in which you wanna ask the question. The cards though really run the gamut, right? So they talk about the most sacred memory. And then the flip side is, under your blue category, which is decisions, medical decisions and things like that.

You have a question, have you chosen a medical or financial power of attorney, which, right in my wheelhouse and I love you for that. So thank you. But these are questions too that even when people have gone through the exercise of estate planning, I don't necessarily know that they share who they chose to play those roles, which is really pretty important, right?

And so having a card game, if you will, to start the conversation and provide the platform, the context, and it takes the angst out of it. Is really revolutionary.

Jason Brown: Thank you.

Advice on Medical Power of Attorney

Jason Brown: Yeah, I, as you are talking about medical power of attorney and from my experience and the reason why as you ask, coming up with these questions, have you chose your medical power of attorney? And I always tell people, if you are married and you have kids, and even if they're older, would say, do not name your spouse as your medical power of attorney.

Candace Dellacona: Really?

Jason Brown: Yes.

Candace Dellacona: Why?

Jason Brown: The decisions and weight that you have to carry in that moment. It is a weight that is unimaginable. The emotional detachment you have to make because you have to make decisions in seconds, minutes, that are life changing, altering decisions that could be life or death. When you are clouded in speaking from an emotional standpoint, oftentimes your decision's gonna come from an emotional place versus an actual logical place of, is this the best thing for my spouse? Is this the best move that's gonna save this person's life? And oftentimes, if you have kids, you have family, you start grieving in that moment, like in that moment.

So you're making decisions about saving someone's life in a state that is the most imbalanced, chemically, physical, spiritual mental state that you have to make a decision. And in that moment I was like, oh, my brother is gonna be my power of attorney, not my kids, not my spouse, because I don't want them to feel like they have to make that decision. I want them to understand I named him because I know, and this almost caused a disruption between me and my brother's relationship because of how hard he was fighting for my wife and the things that he was doing.

I was like, you're fighting like this for her, I want you to fight like this for me. Because in that moment, I was having to deal with her mother, her grandmother, I had a newborn, I had a nanny, I had a 23-year-old, I had my mom, I had my sister, I had my brother, I had her aunt who was like her mom. All of these people, half are at my house, half at my other house, and I'm having to deal with these people. I'm having to deal with the surgeon, i'm having to deal with the oncologist. I'm having to deal with the doctor in Duke. I'm having to deal with their oncologist, the nurses, all of these people I'm having to deal with as I'm trying to deal with myself.

Candace Dellacona: so it's so interesting you're saying that Jason, right? Because you've, what is really clear to me in this conversation is how connected the two of you were and are. Were, and are. And for you to be able to step back and say, I wasn't the right person to make those healthcare decisions 'cause of all these external factors is really just probably one of the most earnest things I've ever heard.

Where who would know her better. And that's interesting because I've never given that advice to my clients that it shouldn't be your partner. I'm not saying that I do provide advice as to who it should be. I think generally my advice when people are trying to pick their agent from a healthcare perspective, I talk about

things like being able to be a great advocate, but not such a strong advocate that their words and their feelings replace the feeling of the person who's going through it.

And my advice is always pick the person who's gonna allow your words to move through them so that they advocate for who you are and what life you wanna live and the type of care that you would want or not want. Sometimes more important, not want.

Jason Brown: I agree and most of the time we think that that's supposed to be our spouse.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: But so even in that moment, there were decisions that I was having to make where I know that once again, because of I knew her,

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: even when it came back to like having to operate, they were like, we would have to cut off half of her brain she would be a vegetable. I know that that's not the type of life that my wife wanted. I know that's not. Now her parents, they were like, Hey, whatever's gonna keep her here,

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: keep her here.

And I'm like, but I've seen her suffering I know that she's not gonna wanna go through life. And even to the point where my wife's mom, she wanted to bring her to the house and have her do hospice at the house. And I was like I have a 1-year-old son here. Why would I traumatize my son by bringing her here and allowing him to see this and go through that. There's already things that I need to work out with him. Why add that onto the plate?

Candace Dellacona: Yeah.

Jason Brown: Those are the things where if I wasn't in that place to make that decision, those are the type of decisions that would've been, those were not selfish decisions, that were decisions made for love. They weren't decisions that were gonna 'cause she wouldn't have wanted

Candace Dellacona: Right.

Jason Brown: I know that. She would not have wanted that.

Candace Dellacona: Right. And most people wouldn't. And I think you're right, that a parent's love is much different in the moment than a partner, a sibling, even a child, right? Where, you can recognize that. I think it's a different feeling as a parent. So whatever the motivation you have in choosing, I think what your advice is you have to find somebody who will have the space to be able to advocate and not allow the other factors to seep in, to influence the decision. To change the decision that would otherwise be the best for that person. That's really hard to do. That's a tall order.

Jason Brown: It is, but it's also a selfless order.

Candace Dellacona: It is. A hundred percent, it is.

Jason Brown: Because you can be selfish and say, no, I'm gonna do this, but are you actually the best person? And for somebody like my wife, who was the most selfless person in the world, her last days, she would actually, she had a WhatsApp group chat and she would just minister to people and she would do these voice recordings. She just wanted to serve and be selfless and she didn't wanna make it about her. And in those moments, that's where I take from her, where I'm like, this game that I created, how do I use my pain and turn it into purpose and not make it about me? How can I do what I know that she would've done? was, how can I

help someone navigate this process and not have to go through as many bumps and hurdles 'cause there's unnecessarily bumps, hurdles, and potholes that you're just gonna have to go through. But she taught me how to be selfless and that's how I actually am moving forward and have moved forward to launching this game.

Expanding the Legacy Conversation

Candace Dellacona: It's incredibly moving the way in which you found the legacy deck and the When What If Happens? What I love too is that you're taking it from all different angles. Jason, you have a deck that's appropriate for parents to kids where it's really geared towards maybe the younger people in the family and making it age appropriate. I think for those listeners who don't have children, they have pets that are like their children, you have figured out a way to parlay that and to having these conversations about the love for their pet and what they want for their pet when they're not here, and really taking it from so many different angles.

And I love that you recognize that it is not one size fits all.

Jason Brown: Absolutely, because I know that everybody experiences loss and everybody goes through a grieving stage. And when I was talking to another person a therapist on my podcast, was actually grieving the loss of being an empty nester

Candace Dellacona: Hmm.

Jason Brown: was having to go through that grieving stage. And when I was getting an IV drip for some hydration, the nurse came in and she was crying, and I was like what's wrong? And she was like, I just lost my dog. And I was like, I understand I know how you feel right now. And I started telling her about my story. And of course, she was like, hold on, now it's a little different. And I said, no, it's not. You are experiencing the loss of someone that had a place in your heart. It's not different. It's the same because the same way that animal gave you security, gave you love, unconditional love. Like it was the same emotions that are just coming from a different place. And that's when know that when it comes to pet loss, people still need a way to grieve and create legacy for their pets as well. And that's when I actually came up with the pet loss edition.

Candace Dellacona: I love that you had the personal experience with someone and you extended them, the kindness and the grace. Which is really one of the things that you talk about a lot. And the surrender of the human experience of grief and what that is. And, no matter what you look like on the outside, your race, your creed, your color, your nationality, we all grieve.

If we love, we grieve. And one of the favorite quotes that I have is by Rumi. And he says something like, the wound is where the light enters you. And I have to say, Jason, that this creation that you've come up with as a brilliant founder and starting this conversation, this legacy conversation, the what's next, what's going to happen?

How will you feel? You've put so much light into the world and finding a way through your pain and help us take one of the difficulties out of our path that maybe you had to face and coming up with these cards and sharing them with the world. I can't think of a better way for you to honor your wife and what you built together.

Jason Brown: If you actually look at the box, it says, inspired by Aja Brown on the box. And my goal is be able to help families navigate these conversations continuously, or continue to create bonds and bridges in their family and start to make end of life preparations a conversation that is a lot more normal because it is necessary. And if that is something that I can continue to do with my wife by my side as we are navigating through this, that is me continuing her legacy by still allowing her to have conversations with people throughout the world. And I hope that this deck reaches a million people to have a million different conversations, because I know if one person has a conversation, they're having it with one to two to 10 people. That 1 million turns into 10 million. That 10 million turns into, it now starts to change the narrative. 'cause legacy is not about death. Legacy is about conversations of how you want to be remembered and talked about. And those conversations happen with this card deck by having this as a tool to start those conversations.

Candace Dellacona: Exactly, and that's what I love about it. Legacy really is about life and the life that you wanna live. How you want people to remember the life that you lived and, knowing that people like you are out there to help us have these conversations in the sandwich generation and modeling for your own children, which is another thing we didn't even get.

I could talk to you for hours as you know, but as launching parents and raising good humans and trying to show them the way, not just in our words, but in our actions. And that is what you have done with this movement. And I firmly believe that the legacy card deck is a revolution and a movement and I'm so happy to be a part of it.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Candace Dellacona: I'm so happy to feature you and I'll tell you that our listeners can hear more from Jason, his perspective and all of the people that he finds interesting in the world on his podcast called When What If Happens. So we will provide the information in the show notes. And I just wanna thank you again today, Jason, for being here and sharing your story and Aja's story. And how you got here because it's really just remarkable and we're a better world to have you in it.

Jason Brown: Thank you. I appreciate you and opening your doors to me. I'm very grateful and I do not take these connections and conversations lightly because I do believe that whoever is listening to this episode and whoever is listening right now, that this is a nudge that it's time for you to start having those conversations.

And I appreciate the work that you are doing as well. And I hope that, all of the listeners out here start to normalize these conversations. 'cause it's just, it's important and it's not a morbid thing. It is a natural thing. It's just we don't know when the what if can happen. So, those conversations can be done in a lighthearted way. Exactly how you did it is exactly how, me and my wife, like that's how we had these conversations. Like we weren't in a room with the blinds closed, with all black on with masks and beanies, and we're like, so let's talk. No, we were on vacation. We could be at the beach. We would be, saying out having a glass shoe, have a glass of wine. I'd be out having a drink and we'd be sitting there just having these conversations. exactly how this is intended for it to be. And I want people to know that these conversations can be had more lighthearted and it does open up the gateway to have these better conversations with practitioners like yourself.

Because I don't believe the first time you guys should be having these conversations is the first time you meet with a practitioner.

Candace Dellacona: Yeah, absolutely right. Absolutely right. And having it part of your daily lives and really thinking about what these questions are and the answers to those questions can really be transformative for your family, for your relationship. So thank you so much for being here, Jason.

Jason Brown: Thank you, I appreciate you.