

How I got my parents out of Ukraine with Kay Korsh – #143



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I'm James Taylor and you're listening to the speakers you podcast a show for aspiring and professional speakers. This episode is with my co-host, Maria Franzoni. Enjoy the episode. This week we're going to do something different with the show. We'd like to

introduce you to an inspiring story of someone who has helped her family and those supporting the civilians who are suffering through these very difficult times. In Ukraine. Now many of you know, our go-to Silas coach, but what you may not know is key is Ukrainian. He is going to share her firsthand experiences of getting her parents out of Ukraine to safety in the UK. And we're also going to talk about what we can all do to help the people of Ukraine just now. So Kay has been helping people refine this style for nearly two decades and work with some amazing personalities along the way like actors. Lily Allen, sweet Lily Lily James Elizabeth Debakey, rezar met Ben Whishaw, we're the one racing driver, Jenson Button and musician will, she founded mind over fashion in 2019. And her main priority is to tune into a client's needs and to gently elevate their existing Style to make them feel comfortable and presentable. According to their brand and lifestyle. Her approach is candid and compassionate as we're going to find out now please welcome Kay Korsh.

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Ukraine

Kay Korsh 1:20

Hi, JJ Maria. Hello, hello.

Maria Franzoni 1:23

Okay. I'm trying something different. Today, we're going to be looking like a real news show here. Look at this. Kay, thank you so much for coming on and sharing something that is very personal, but something that we all need to, to know about hear about. And we're very lucky that we haven't had to go through this. So tell us first of all, wherein Ukraine are you from?

Kay Korsh 1:42

So I'm from Odesa, which is on the Black Sea, which is actually one of the not many areas. Right, relatively quiet for now and not touched by the war. Which is nice for the people who I know who are still there.

Maria Franzoni 2:02

I used to be able to stay in contact with people there.

Kay Korsh 2:05

Yes, actually, that was one of my worries that I won't be able to. But for now. It's all fine. Thankfully I can. There is the internet and the connection is there. So I can stay in touch with everybody and the bank systems are working well enough to be able to support them as well.

James Taylor 2:28

So if we go back to before was happened to happen? Mindset
Crimea desso kind of famous for humor, people. Odesa is kind of
famous for being that's where the comedians from Ukraine come
from? Is that correct?

Kay Korsh 2:46

Yes, exactly. People from Odessa have a very specific sense of
humor. Sorry, I have this line on my head coming from the sunlight,
which I couldn't be able I wasn't able to block. So you'll just have to
excuse me for that. Anyway, so there is a big Jewish community in
Odessa, which I wonder if that's the reason why there is a specific
sense of humor. But yes, definitely. It's very, very famous. And there
are loads of special phrases, you know, which people outside of
Odessa, they would recognize that that's all just a style humor?

James Taylor 3:31

Yes, no. And I know it's famous, you have a beautiful opera house,
there's a really beautiful place. So is that where your parents are?
were, you know, when everything started, but what was their life like
before that invasion happened?

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HOW I GOT MY PARENTS OUT OF UKRAINE

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Life Before Invasion

Kay Korsh 3:45

So when you're living your life, I think it's psychologically it's really difficult to accept that something might happen. So Well, certainly before the 24th. So I actually visited them just less than two weeks before the invasion. And originally that, that was booked a few months before that, and I was going to come for four nights. And on the day when I was flying, I was on the train and my husband texted me Are you sure you want to go? Because we were already kind of

going back and forth? Should I go? Should they not go? Because I've got two kids, I've got responsibilities. So even if nothing happened, and just for whatever precautions, they would stop the flights, I would be stuck there and wouldn't be with my family here, which would be really difficult even on the simple practical level. So anyway, so I got this text from him and I was like, you know what's happening and that was the day when the US government recommended for the US citizens, which were in you crane to leave. And anyway, I spent two hours in the airport, stressing and thinking should I go Should I not go until you know, going actually on the plane. And I eventually decided that I'd much rather go, even if it's just for one day and see my parents and then go back. So I want that. And I'm glad that they did, because I think it worked out best that way. And in then that was on that evening, the UK citizens also were advised to leave Ukraine as well. So it was kind of the day. Coincidentally, it was quite a significant day that one I was on my way there. And when I was there, I made the decision. This so I slept good the late in the evening, and the next morning, I made the decision to change my flights. And they just booked a different flight and went back on that day. So I spent less than 24 hours there. But as I said, I still think it was the best outcome. And then when I got back again, there was obviously I was in touch with my parents all the time. And still, my parents remained calm all this time. And you know, they didn't really think anything would happen. And I was kind of obviously everybody wants to believe that nothing would happen. And I was kind of going from my stress levels were going up and down throughout the time. But that was kind of trying to lead a normal life. By the way, my business partner is Ukrainian and she is from Kiev and I have been working with her for two years now. In on in distance. And she was more worried while also because she was in Kiev, which is the center obviously of Ukraine. But she would say to me, okay, let's just work, let's just do our work every day, whatever we can. And then eventually she moved kind of a bit out of Kiev. She they her family had, like a little country house not far from Kiev at all, no, not deep into the countryside. So they moved, I

think on the 15th, like just a few days before the 24th. And anyway, so I kind of I'm sidetracking now to my friend, but it's also quite an interesting story, how they left. They're now in Germany, which I can also kind of give me

James Taylor 7:54

a mood crosses over to kind of Poland than through to Germany that way.

Kay Korsh 7:59

Yeah. So if you like, shall I go back to my parents?

Maria Franzoni 8:04

Yes. Tell us about their journey to the UK. You know, when did you make the decision that this is what should happen? And how did you plan it and make it work?

Journey to the UK

Kay Korsh 8:14

So basically, when it kicked off on the 24th You know like I was calling God this these messages when I switched my phone on in the morning, and like I called them at like it was here like 6 am And I was like shouting, you know, what's happening and all of this and still in Odessa. My parents didn't hear anything, even though I mean, like no explosions, nothing even though my friend who doesn't live that far from them, did hear. So anyway, eventually they're like, Okay, we're not. Everything's fine. I'm like, okay, so I was kind of aging them all the time. It was a very, very long process

because you kind of have to get somebody ready. You can't just, they're adults, you I can't just twist the arm, you know. So it was a lot of thinking about how to approach it. And I was that night, the night of the 24th like I was just a way and I was really distressed. And we kind of with my husband, we made a plan. You know, he said okay, well because I was like I should have gotten them out earlier and stuff like this. And we made the plan with my husband that we will get them out. So you know and then in he took a day off and we basically spent the whole day thinking you know, looking at the map talking to people who when you said there is A mom from my daughter's school who is in crisis management at the big firms. So she had some sort of insight on, you know, the routes, various routes. And we initially thought they would leave via Romania, which so then order suits on the Black Sea, the South, and they could go via Romania, and it would take fairly long because of the queues, as the queues, if you saw on the news, the queues of the cars lead into the, towards the border, they can take days, literally days, like 48 hours longer than that to be in the queue. And my parents have a car, but they, you know, what would they then do with this car? Anyway, so we had this plan about Romania, and then I also another mum from my daughter school mentioned, she is affiliated with the church here in London. And she mentioned that missionaries who used to live in London, now live in Moldova, Graham, and Becky, and in Kishinev, and they help people who cross the border in Moldova. And they she connected me with this person with grandma and I spoke to him and he laid out, he knew how people are crossing the border. So all of a sudden, I actually had a solid plan, versus just thinking about it in my head, which was like, I don't know, a million times better. And the great thing about that plan was that my parents are just 60 kilometres away from Moldova. So it was doable, even by food, you know, like, you can walk it in, like 10 hours or something. And I told this plan to my parents and because things were changing every day, so fast. As I was talking to them delivering the plan, another piece of news came through, which was that they extended the curfew time, and you

can travel by car. So again, they got scared, and they were obviously you know, my dad is 75. And you know, were worried about his stress levels. So, and my mom was like, we're very grateful, but we're not going anywhere. So I had to make a decision for myself to let it go. So I was like, there is nothing I can do about it. I just can support them over the phone on Zoom, I literally spent days with my mom on Zoom, not talking about the situation, actually screen sharing a TV program, just so that we can distract ourselves and that I knew that we could connect. And obviously, I it was okay for some time, but then I couldn't.

I couldn't really be that way. So at some point, maybe for 24 hours, it was okay. But then I was like, I have to pinch again. Like I have to kind of do something about it. And I was it was World Book Day at the kids school and I went to my friend's house. And she was helping me to make the costume for my son. And she was you know, it was really lovely because she was really supportive. And she basically just did all of it herself. And that was kind of like shouting and you know, I can get quite emotional and expressive. And then I called my mom and you know, not thinking what I was gonna say, but she said, again, you know, like, there is a lot of panic, it's the panic, which makes and I just lost it, you know, like I was just like, you just have to come because at least they don't you know, there are people who can't come because they're within the family they have under 60 men who can't leave and it's and all they don't have anywhere to go in that case it was much more straightforward experience. So anyway, they and I finished the conversation not knowing I thought they were gonna get upset with me and then I called a couple of hours later to kind of make sure that we still are connected, you know that they're not gonna desert me or anything. And my mom said she was cooking chicken for the road.

James Taylor 14:57

That's when you knew it was gonna happen. Yeah,

Kay Korsh 15:00

that's how I knew she was cooking chicken for the road for the sandwiches. They connected with the taxi driver who my mom in you and he picked them up the following morning and drove them very skillfully as close as possible to the border with Palanca in Moldova. And they only had to work for one hour, which is nothing compared to some other cases. And then when they got to the border, it was, you know, it was maybe a couple of hours, but as things go, it was the most straightforward experience as it could be. And then once they crossed the border, Graham's friend, you know, Graham, the missionary in the kitchen of his friend who is also affiliated with the church, picked up my parents, he actually also spoke Russian. And he took them to Grandma's house in the question of where they spent the night. Then Graham put them on the train from Kishinev to Yachi, which is a Yasi which is the closest place to the border with Moldova, Romania, and Moldova and border and the closest place to the airport. That's where I was already waiting for them. So I spent the night in Romania Wilde spent the night in the kitchen off. And then I met them. There were no tears actually just smiles. The operation in Romania is just incredible. The amount those people are doing is just absolutely mind-blowing. They, there were loads of volunteers, it was all organized that put people on minibusses or taxis, they're organizing their state. Their lacing like with the organizing that flights is just insane. By the way, also, like I met this policeman in the tech station, who said, Here's my phone number, you can WhatsApp me with any questions or call me, you know, like, it's just everybody's just amazing. And then, when we were leaving Romania the following morning. In the airport, the God who was checking the passports, asked if I'm taking my parents from Ukraine to the UK, and he looked at my dad and he said Slavoj grainy, which means

Glory to Ukraine. Yes. And, you know, he, everybody was really supportive. And then we got to the UK and we also this, our relative gave us a commendation for my parents. Where they are now. So yeah, I can also tell you what it's like, I'm not gonna stop Maria. I

Maria Franzoni 18:18

don't know. I'm just saying don't. It's like, I mean, I'm so emotional listening to this is just amazing. Well done. Well done.

Kay Korsh 18:30

Well, okay.

James Taylor 18:32

Hi. Just a question. My side is, you know, in the news, you put the news every day, and I know my wife would do this. And suddenly, we just have to turn the TV off because we find it so distressing, especially when we see children involved. How do you feel about humanity? Now, after that experience, or your parents went through?



Humanity

Kay Korsh 18:54

I think I always had a good feeling about humanity. I don't follow the news. I only listen to my friends I spoke speak to my friends. I actually never watched the news in my life. I prefer to kind of talk to people with real experiences. And I obviously, there are people in this world who are doing horrible things. And there are probably reasons in the brain. I always connect everything to the brain into the brain to the genes. There is some sort of reasons in the brain why they're doing these things. I prefer not to think about this. I just prefer to every day I just try to do what I can to help. Because now that my parents are here, I can eat and sleep which I couldn't before and my brain is freer. to try and help others who are still there, and who need help.

Maria Franzoni 20:07

And actually, on that, would you share with us what you're doing because you're very actively helping others, which is the work you're doing to help your fellow Ukrainians.

Helping Fellow Ukrainians

Kay Korsh 20:16

So there is another there, then my daughter's class, who is Ukrainian, and his son, obviously, who's in the class is Ukrainian. And I heard about this mission from him. And this is called Make a Difference UAE. And this mission started three days after the invasion. And it started with just one guy who went on the internet and started looking for things he can buy to donate. And he came across somebody selling an ambulance, and he decided to buy this ambulance. And he then got in touch with the hospitals and got the things that were needed to supplement. Yeah, the equipment and the medication. It's all that we do is mainly connected with medical supplies. And we're dealing directly with the hospitals in Ukraine, and inquiring what is needed there, which is really important, rather than sending just anything which might not be needed at this minute. And so this guy then so he did this first, and then a lot of people got interested in it. And so far, there have been 13 ambulances sent, both purchased and sent. And the interesting thing as well to know is that they in Ukraine, they actually need ambulance cars, because they don't have enough. And they use these cars to transport the injured people. And they need all of the equipment, which is in the ambulance cars. So now all of a sudden, it's turning into a big operation. And it's now registered as a nonprofit organization. And it's kind of gaining momentum. So there are a few ways to help and people either can help by donating on the link, which you put up. And, or another way would be for an organization which can be either a school or a church or any organization really, people can fundraise to buy the ambulance themselves, just the ambulance. And then we can take care of all the logistics because we now have

connections on the borders and we talk directly to the hospitals asking what is needed where and dependent on what is needed, well, then these ambulances go directly to that place. And the drivers then come back by planes back to the UK, and then they can take them and the next ambulance there. So I think that way of fundraising and buying the ambulance for an organization and then giving us the ambulance is actually quite an interesting way because it's like a project which people can take on and it doesn't have to be an EU ambulance. It can be like, you know, an old one. And another thing which I heard is apparently over the pandemic, there were loads of ambulances purchased but now they are out of use so they're actually not being used stored somewhere. So that's another thing to keep in mind. So I guess it can be any organization or it can be specifically medical related person or organization who can hear this now and potentially have some ideas and anybody is welcome to get in touch with me or would make a difference UAE so that

James Taylor 24:27

I can see and Maria if you're watching this on video, just now Maria's put up a link to the JustGiving link crowdfunding TDO stand with Ukraine and we'll make sure we put a link to as well at speaking business.tv in the resources section, they will put links to that as well. So after So, is this [justgiving.com/crowdfunding/TDO](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/TDO) What is to stand for?

Kay Korsh 24:55

To do is a cafe which is Originally where it started, so I joined a little bit later through the that from my daughter's school. And initially, when I saw this link it was it had the cafe bit on it, so to do is the name of the cafe in Canary Wharf, which started with this among other people.

James Taylor 25:22

Fantastic. We'll put this link here. And how are your parents now they're getting settled into life in the UK, are they? How are they dealing with the terrible food that we have here?

Maria Franzoni 25:34

Terrible,

James Taylor 25:36

strange weather how they are getting acclimatized.

Kay Korsh 25:39

It's really difficult, very, very tough, because they're obviously they've been ripped out of their environment, and they're completely dependent. And my mom speaks English. So it's easier for her, but my dad doesn't. And you know, he just wants his life back. And in no means I can say that they are being settled in yet. Because they don't know how long they want to go back. Yeah, they're waiting for it to finish and they want to go back. We don't know how long it's gonna take. And it's an ongoing thing every day. So it's in the mind of a person who has to leave their place. Who, you know, is made to leave their place? It's really difficult. Yeah, well,

James Taylor 26:49

hopefully, they'll be able to return to their, homeland very soon, hopefully, something there's, we see some kind of resolution to this as well, and they can go back and be with some of their friends, as

well. But incredible story, Kay, the work that you you've done. I don't know your husband, your friends. I know your friends in London, everyone that's been supportive and made a difference campaign Ukraine as well. So we just wanted to say from myself, and we thanks just so much for coming on and sharing that story as well. And I know we realized we both really encourage everyone to go on that link that Maria shared with sharing and going support, you know, you just you know, doesn't matter what to give some support to this, this really important court.

Kay Korsh 27:35

Thank you very much.

Maria Franzoni 27:36

Thank you. Thank you. Okay, thank you.

James Taylor 27:38

Thank you, Kay. You can subscribe to the speakers you podcast on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts while you're there. Leave us a review. I really appreciate it. I'm James Taylor, and you've been listening to the speakers you podcast.