



Selling Disruption™ Show

With Mark S. A. Smith

*Millennial Disruption:
Success and Value Redefined*

Natalie Elisha

Mark S A Smith: My guest today is Natalie Elisha, a 28 year old kick-ass superstar millennial lawyer from Manhattan who I met three, four years ago I think it was, having breakfast on Madison Avenue. Was sitting next to her and she struck up a conversation. We had such a great time, and she bought me breakfast. So here's payback. Invitation to the Selling Disruption Show. She has just released a new book called The Millennial's Guide To the Universe: How To Live the New International Dream, which really impressed me. Because the most disruptive force on the planet right now is the millennial generation. Welcome, Natalie.

Natalie Elisha: Thank-you so much, Mark, for having me. I am so thrilled to be with you today and talk all about how the millennial evolved generation is going to bring such goodness into this world.

Mark S A Smith: It's true. Now I raised five millennial kids. I'm a big believer in millennials. They have helped me reshape my view of the world from the old stodgy baby boomer that I am, to a radically different approach. Listener, the first thing we've got to do is stop shaming the millennials. Stop it.

Natalie Elisha: Totally. People like to say millennials are quote unquote entitled. "They come into work. They don't want to put their head down and work hard". No. That's absolutely false. Millennials want to work hard, but they're going to work hard for something that means something to them. For their passion. For their purpose. They are so awoken to the fact that the baby boomer generation, which tucked their head down, worked for 50 years, to then get a pension and then die in a nursing home or long term care facility, is not the dream that they have. They want to start living that dream that Tim Ferris called the four work week now.

It's not to say that only four hours or ten hours a week are devoted to work. But it's, what is the passion and the reason for the work, and what are we going to do about it?

Mark S A Smith: I think Tim Ferris' book is really the shifting focus from being paid for hours, to being paid for outcome.

Natalie Elisha: Absolutely. It's all about productivity, Mark. As you read my book, you understand my journey. I did college in two years, and law school in two and a half. That doesn't mean that my experience was worth half the time. It probably means it was worth double, even though I did it in half the time. People have to stop thinking that working long and hard hours is equating to anything. I'm a fast girl. You give me a project, it's done immediately. Does that mean I'm not working as hard? No. I think it means I'm working a lot harder. But people have different speeds and different rhythms.

We have to be able to tap in and understand that that's going to lead to actual productivity, as opposed to, "How many hours were you sitting looking at Facebook on the screen?"

Mark S A Smith: That is absolutely irrelevant. The question is, "What's the outcome that you want?". One thing I know about the millennial generation is they are very goal focused. A lot of that has been driven I believe by the experiences they have with video games. My problem with video games personally is, I get so sucked in that the world just disappears. But they're very good at solving complex problem with other people that they're speaking to, but not face to face. They're not frustrated. They just take the lumps and continue on. That creates a different outcome in the workplace. What we have to do is measure the distance to goal that we have accomplished.

Natalie Elisha: Absolutely, Mark. It's not a linear path. It's not like you wake up today, you do this, and then you go home. No. It could be working at midnight. It could be working not for a week. I just took a two week sabbatical to my home in Miami, but it's so great because things unraveled in a way that I needed them to. I recharged my battery, came back to New York, and things have been supercharged.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah.

Natalie Elisha: Who is to say that we have to constantly be on the 24/7 grind? It's unhealthy. In fact, in our most primitive of religions, first religion is the Old Testament. It's Judaism. The sanctity of a Shabbat day, which is really a day for rest, was in as one of the top three things you can do to live a healthy life. When have we started becoming this country that's completely crazy about quote unquote religion, and yet our work schedules don't abide by the same sanctity of rest?

Mark S A Smith: It's absolutely counterproductive. Personally, I have to have at least one day a week where I do nothing.

Natalie Elisha: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: I mean absolutely nothing that I don't feel like doing personally. Without that I get burnt out. Friends, you have to have that time to recharge and renew your brain so that you can be at your best. What do you think is the most important point in your new book, The Millennial's Guide To the Universe?

Natalie Elisha: I think the overlying point is this. I don't care what has happened to you. Get up and keep going. There is nothing that can hold you down once you have a very definitive vision of what it is that you want. With that vision, please god get your financial bearings. I don't care if you want to be the next Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, Barbara Corcoran, whatever. The fact is that without understanding cash in and out, because right now we do exist with a cash society. You have to understand how you're going to be able to support yourself and your family with that.

64 percent of people, Mark, die without a will. Did they really think they were going to be the one to make it out of this thing alive? What is wrong with our generation that this is allowable to happen? Believe you me Mark, I'm an estate

attorney. Many people don't want to spend a small fee to plan their assets, which can save them hundreds of thousands if not millions. Their kids will very quickly pay whatever fee the attorney says so that they can get the money mom and dad worked so hard for.

Mark S A Smith: Interesting point. It's hard to think as a young person about dying. It's even hard as an older person to think about dying. But we still have to make those preparations so that our legacy that we've generated is appropriately managed.

Natalie Elisha: Absolutely. That's really intricate to the entire book, right? Forget about death and dying. It really is the life plan. "What is my plan? What do I want?". That's the basic question. If you don't know what you want, listen, I have Waze on my phone, which is supposed to be the best GPS. It's going to tell you where a cop is, where there's a camera light. But if I don't have the vicinity to which I need to go, or at least something, a community, an address, something that can lead me there, it doesn't matter how good the software is. I'm not going to get there.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. The best GPS can't help until you select a destination. One of the things that millennial are charged with by older generations is that they don't want to work and pay their dues to get where they want to go. You really rail against that in the book, which I agree with. Tell me your viewpoint on that about that, and I'm going to share with you mine.

Natalie Elisha: Sure. Paying your dues is bullshit, as my chapter six soundfully states. People when they look at the table of contents are always so drawn to that chapter. They go, "What do you mean? This is the stuff you're telling millennials? As it is, they don't want to quote unquote work". No no no no no. Paying your dues for someone else for a vision you don't believe for a paycheck? That's the stuff that doesn't work anymore. Paying your dues does not mean working hard. In fact, some millennial workers are the hardest workers I know.

Look, the biggest and best companies in the world today are run by millennials. Many of whom don't even have a college degree. What I'm saying paying your dues is, "Well, mom and dad told me that I'm going to go to college. I'm going to meet my spouse. I'm going to buy a house, white picket fence optional, and then I'm going to work. Then I'm going to retire, get social security, and die".

Mark S A Smith: Well that's the American dream that we were sold coming out of the second world war. It was all based on work that Edward Bernays did in his book, Propaganda. We were sold a bill of goods.

Natalie Elisha: Which was false.

Mark S A Smith: It was designed, the intention was actually reasonable. It was designed to help us stay out of war. Because in the past, every time we had economic issues, we made a war.

Natalie Elisha: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mark S A Smith: The administration said, "There's got to be a different way. Let's create demand". Well in creating that demand, they've stolen our happiness.

Natalie Elisha: It's amazing, Mark. I have this conversation with everyone. That propaganda American dream might have been sufficient back then because people were willing to work for information for 30 years, and then were quite frankly going to die at 65 or 70, which is why social security worked.

Mark S A Smith: Mm-hmm (affirmative), right. But we don't die at 65 anymore.

Natalie Elisha: No we don't, and here's the thing too. We don't need to wait for information. You go on Google and you have more information than any doctor can tell you, and more information than any lawyer can tell you. Everything at your fingertips if you just put in the right search.

Mark S A Smith: Mm-hmm (affirmative), that's right. If you know the right questions you can get every answer.

Natalie Elisha: Absolutely. Mark, here's the thing. So often my friends are in their late 20s and 30s, and 40s and 50s. Because of my professional career I have many older friends. They'll tell me, "Okay. I became the lawyer. I became the doctor. I became the engineer. Now what?".

Mark S A Smith: Right.

Natalie Elisha: At 27 my life is over? I've achieved my quote unquote success? Success means one thing, a successful life. Which to me equates to happiness, period. Everyone who's quote unquote successful and has the corner office and blah blah blah, they're miserable.

Mark S A Smith: They are.

Natalie Elisha: Because the spirituality and the inner feeding the outside has been so lost. Now there's this revolution happening, and this is basically what Alvin Toffler speaks about in The Third Wave, which is the book that came out generations ago. It really was about the way in which the educational system was established in the US. What they did was, they built out a curriculum that quote unquote spoke about reading, writing, and arithmetic so that people would learn how to sit down, shut up, and do as they're told.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. Take orders. It absolutely removed that sense of inner compass. Everything was about removing the inner compass and creating success as being defined by somebody else's compass.

Natalie Elisha: It's by a degree that sits on your wall that you spend \$300,000 for, which you can never eradicate even in bankruptcy, and which, if we don't fix that problem,

Mark, I suspect that people in my generation are going to be jumping off the Empire State Building in thousands a day because there will be no other way out.

Mark S A Smith: That's really amazing. I did not realize that bankruptcy did not absolve student debt.

Natalie Elisha: No it does not. In fact, they've gotten smart. Even if the people die, let's say, and the student loan gets eradicated, you know who's the co-signer? Mom and dad.

Mark S A Smith: Mm-hmm (affirmative), so they're on the hook for that. Boy, it's a scam.

Natalie Elisha: They're on the hook. It's a complete scam. Listen, I'm a highly educated woman and I'm an attorney. I went to law school on a full scholarship. I did the whole thing. I'm not some person who never went to school saying school is a scam. School is an amazing ability to get the shining star credential that our society wants, and to get the credibility, and it's a great education.

However, if that education puts you in a half a million dollars worth of debt, which is going to take you your entire life to pay off? You've really got to think, "Is this the right path for me?".

Mark S A Smith: That's right. You and I share the same belief set. I have two and a half degrees. I'm an engineer. I've got a degree in media. I have of an MBA. I gave up when my MBA instructors knew less about business than I did.

Natalie Elisha: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: I have five children, two of which have college degrees. Two of which went a way other than college. One is doing sort of the split. She's going to college and she's also getting experience in the world of management simultaneously. I truly believe that today, the only reason to go to college is, as you point out in your book, if you're required to to get a license to do your profession, such as a lawyer, doctor, engineer, architect. Otherwise, it's not a good choice. Go out and get experience. Go work for somebody who's doing those kinds of things or form a company. If you took the quarter of a million dollars it takes to go to school and invested that in a company, you'll be a multi-millionaire by the time most people have their four year degree.

Natalie Elisha: Absolutely. You know, Mark, it's amazing. I had this conversation last night with a friend over dinner. I said, "Not every kid is the same". A parent should really have the conversation and say, "Okay kids. Each one of you is getting a \$50,000 allotment. You can do with it as you want. You can invest it in a business. You can go to school. But you are writing the checks from your own fund. As a result, you'd better be financially savvy and understand what that means". Because listen, it's easy to say, "Sure. I'll take on the debt", because you don't feel it. It's like credit card debt, right? "Well I just swipe the magic card".

Mark S A Smith: That's right. Or poker chips and the gambling table, right. You completely get separated from the real meaning of money. I think you're right, a lot of people don't really understand viscerally the idea of finance and money. We were not taught that in school. Of course that's part of the ongoing game to allow people to feel comfortable with debt. As you point out in the book, it's bondage. It's slavery.

Natalie Elisha: It is. You can never get out because the interest rates will keep you down forever. It's not like the rest of your life stops so that you can pay back a debt. You still have to live. You still have to eat. You still want to travel. How are you possibly going to do it? I can hire an attorney today to work at my law firm for \$50,000 in New York City.

Mark S A Smith: Wow, that's insane. How can they live in New York City for 50 grand?

Natalie Elisha: With 17 roommates.

Mark S A Smith: That's not life. That's a college dorm.

Natalie Elisha: It's worse than a college dorm.

Mark S A Smith: No, I can't imagine. No thank-you. That's really insane. Because of all of this, millennials have a completely different approach to the world. They want to disrupt and they want to do things in a different way.

I want to get back to the idea, my view of paying the dues is, it's not about dues. It's about illustrating value. The thing to keep in mind is that if you're working for an organization that's not yours, if you're working for somebody else, you have to illustrate to your superior and to their superior that you can deliver consistent solid judgment. That you're safe and you're not going to embarrass them. You're not going to embarrass their peers. You can generate an order of magnitude more value for the company than you cost. When you do those three things, you are promotable. If you can keep that in mind, you might call that paying your dues. The reality is you're illustrating value. You're selling yourself up the food chain.

Now the challenge that I think a lot of millennials have is, two or three levels up are typically of a different generation, and they use a different judgment factor to do so. If you're going to step into that environment, you're going to have to make some adjustments for them to feel safe with you. If that's the path you want to take. Otherwise you've got to go make your own way. You've got to create your own company.

Natalie Elisha: You have to. It's an amazing point, Mark, and I couldn't agree with you more. Here's the thing. If millennials want to move up in traditional corporations, take ownership. Even if it's not your company, you'd better act like your name is on the line every second.

Mark S A Smith: That's a beautiful piece of advice.

Natalie Elisha: Because if you just treat it like, "I'm clocking in and clocking out", and you don't care, believe me. You'll never move up. This is somebody's corporation that was built as a business on a shoestring budget that happens to now be a multi-billion dollar company, or a multi-million dollar company. But it's somebody's baby that took growth. If you are going to invest your time and your life into this company, it better be worth it. You better feel that it is your brand.

Mark, I would go into law school on finals day, and I'd be wearing dress, heels, and full makeup. All my other peers would be in sweats, hair on the side. No. You are always your brand. I don't care if you're 15, 50, or 100. You are always your brand. What are you putting out into the world? If you are going to take it upon yourself to allow someone else to write a paycheck to you, you better feel that you represent the company. If you can't feel that way, find a new company. Or start your own.

Mark S A Smith: For those folks that are hiring millennials, understand that what they want is a lifestyle. They're looking for a tribe. Millennials choose culture first. You have to help them navigate that corporate structure that you're generating, understanding that we are in for a massive turnover in corporations in the next five to ten years. Ten years ago there were executives that wanted to retire but couldn't because their 401ks weren't worth a dime. Now with Wall Street at record high levels, they can now afford to retire.

We have this enormous mass of people that are looking to retire really soon, and we're starting to see it. For the first time people are letting go and retiring. It makes room for other people to move up that have a different generational view. There is a turning tide where millennials are going to be able to excel as some of the older cohorts are retiring.

Natalie Elisha: Mark, it has to be. Because there is no exit for any of us except for six feet under. Okay, maybe you can retire early. The millennial generation is our only hope for longevity of our companies. There is no way around it.

Mark S A Smith: Of course.

Natalie Elisha: You can say, "Well I don't like millennials. I hear all the time they don't know how to work. They don't want to pay their dues". Guess what? You'd better shift the vision of your company to match what millennials want, because otherwise your company will be dead in the ground.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. Both from a customer standpoint as well as an employee standpoint.

Natalie Elisha: Absolutely. Here's the thing, Mark. It's not the fault of the millennials. It used to be that you'd come into a company. I went into my first law firm, the boss didn't even greet me. They said, "Go upstairs. Find the green book on Medicaid and read it". Are you freaking kidding me? If there had been a process and a vision,

right? Look, we do estate planning law. We protect the single dollars that people have made for their whole life. We protect legacy. That's how I'd run my business. But that was never explained to me when I went into a firm.

Where is the passion and the purpose behind it? If you as the owner of the business do not make it your job, your number one job, to hire effectively and train effectively the people around the vision and mission statement, what do you stand for? Most owners don't even have this.

Mark S A Smith: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Natalie Elisha: How do you expect your millennial to care if you're not telling them what you guys care about? You're hiding the ball because you haven't done the work, so now you're pointing the finger and blaming the millennial. Well three fingers are pointing back at you and saying, "Where's the work that you put in to figure out what this company stands for, except for making money?".

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, and that's not enough because millennials understand the impact of making money is not the source of happiness. Now I have to say that it's not millennials' fault. It's actually my fault. I'll tell you why. I raised my five millennial children the way that I wished that I had been raised. With privilege and opportunity and a wide range of experiences that allowed them to pick and choose in ways that I couldn't.

Now don't get me wrong, I was raised well. But we also created an environment that really is the next generation of awareness. The next generation of consciousness.

Natalie Elisha: Sure.

Mark S A Smith: They're not going to put up with the propaganda BS that I was raised with. I'm going to take some responsibility for this.

Natalie Elisha: So on point. Here's the thing. The people who are starting businesses and making change in the millennial generation are typically the children of immigrants like I am. My family are first generation immigrants. We weren't given anything. You want it? You go get it. I would bring a 98.6 home to my father and he would say, "Natalie, what is this?". That is how I was raised.

Here's the thing. I can't blame my peers who happened to be second, third, fourth generation here. Their family did very well. But without that hunger, and once money is now stable, once your parents can give you everything you need, of course you're not going to be as hungry to work for a corporation. Because money is no longer motivating you. These corporations are having the carrot stick be the money. Guess what? These kids for the most part are coming from families that had money. Money's not going to motivate these people. It's something different.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, it's personal legacy and culture and lifestyle that drive all that. The alternative to that of course is create your own business. But let me tell you something, entrepreneurship is not for sissies. As you well know.

Natalie Elisha: You'd better have a thick skin, number one, two, three, and four, for the many times you're going to fall and need to recreate and rebrand. It is not for the weak. Mark, there are people there who will want to be part of it and tell you that they have all this experience and expertise and want to ride the coattails. Listen, I've been burned. So have you I'm sure, and so has every entrepreneur.

Mark S A Smith: Indeed.

Natalie Elisha: This is how you learn. It is not for the week.

Mark S A Smith: It's not. I've been an entrepreneur for 27 years, and I've had great years where I've made a hell of a lot of money. I've had bad years where I barely scraped by. But I wouldn't give it up, because I get to choose. Every day I get to choose who I work with and who I live with, and what I create. There's nothing like it. My worst day as an entrepreneur was worse than my worst day in the corporate world.

Natalie Elisha: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: It's not for sissies.

Natalie Elisha: No.

Mark S A Smith: With that said, I have my own company because it allows me to set my culture. I don't have to agree to anybody else's culture. Both millennials and older generations listening, understand that that's the clash. That's the piece right there that we're battling, is millennials' desire for meaning and the generational desire for meaning may be two different things.

Natalie Elisha: I think you hit the nail on the head for sure with what my personal belief system is. When you are an entrepreneur, and in everything in life, entrepreneurship just is at the forefront. It's a choice, as you said. What has happened in America and in the world is, everyone's a victim. Everyone has this, that. They can't move ahead because of this problem. No no no no no. We have chosen this path, and we can make a change any day. But it's scary as hell.

Mark S A Smith: Yeah, we can make a change today, and you're absolutely right. Media sells victimhood.

Natalie Elisha: Sure.

Mark S A Smith: All news stories are about victims. Anybody who's on personal assistance considers themselves to a victim. You can not generate abundance when you blame somebody else. It's impossible.

Natalie Elisha: It's the scarcity model as opposed to the abundance mentality, which you me and some other really enlightened people understand. It's hysterical, right? Because if there are no jobs, create a new company and then you can make unlimited jobs.

Mark S A Smith: That's right.

Natalie Elisha: But people don't see it that way. They'll rather be pushing their resume that isn't working for three years, than try their hand at a new company. It's amazing to me.

Mark S A Smith: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's right.

Natalie Elisha: Just try. Mark, I always knew I would never go to a big law firm. I was never going to work for 15 years for someone maybe to tell me I can now be be-throned to be a partner, and then figure out how to go bring business because I was never allowed to do so before. When I started my firm and built it into what I built to, at 26 and 27 I'm getting offers from mid size and big firms saying, "Bring over your book and you can come in as a partner".

Mark S A Smith: Beautiful, and you're saying, "I don't think so".

Natalie Elisha: Because again, they're not willing to pay what I know I'm worth.

Mark S A Smith: Right. Exactly.

Natalie Elisha: Why would I ever take a pay cut for something that I do myself, I have no boss, and I'm able to actually do as I please and do the right thing every time? Because I get to choose what the right thing is.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. Which is the same reason why I'm in business. I get to choose what the right thing is every time.

Natalie Elisha: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Millennials, that's why you may want to spin up your own organization. Other generations, that's why you have to understand why millennials feel the way they feel. I think that your book is extraordinary and definitely worth reading, whatever generation you are. I know that you wrote it for those from nine to 90, although it's aimed squarely at millennials. It's a healthy dose of great advice to anybody who needs to reinvent themselves, and anybody who wants to succeed in our current generational situation, understanding that massive disruption is going on. Both within our culture, and within our corporations.

With that in mind, friends, you've got to do things a little bit different. So Natalie, what's next for you?

Natalie Elisha: Working on producing a show that brings media in a healthy dose to the world. Bringing real life skills and opportunities to people with positivity. Helping to run this world more efficiently. Continuing to run my practice in a way that helps all people that I come in contact with. Who knows, maybe I'll throw my hat in the ring in eight years when I'm eligible for the presidency because we need a little blonde ambitious obnoxious woman up there to spice things up.

Mark S A Smith: I love it.

Natalie Elisha: Going to schools and hoping to spread this message. I know that this book is going to change the world, and I know that there are certain things that can be implemented on campuses right now to make it better. That's what I'm working on with an amazing team of people who have somehow all come together, and it's going to happen. We're going to make the college experience again worthwhile by bringing in real opportunity. I can't wait. I can't wait to see how much better people's lives become.

Mark, we're going to have community centers soon around the planet where people are going to come and live life. I'm very excited for this all to unfold. It's all good. It's all for positive stuff. It's all to make the world a better place and shift it, and it has to also come, Mark, working hand in hand with the government. Because we can make every change we want, but if they're not incorporating it into our laws, it's a real problem.

Mark S A Smith: That's right. Well I see massive shifts in political base, for the same reasons we've talked about already.

Natalie Elisha: Yeah.

Mark S A Smith: Millennials, you've got to get involved. It's a bunch of BS, but you've got to get involved and it's going to change the world. Most of the things that hold us back are policy, and we can change the policy. We can agree to new policies. We can create new policies and of course you being an attorney and understanding the navigation of the law can help folks understand how to do that better. I'm really grateful for that. As a boomer I am grateful for all the work that the millennials are doing. I am so excited for the future of this country.

Natalie Elisha: Me too.

Mark S A Smith: I think it's going to be extraordinary, and I'm really grateful that I can watch it. I can make shifts on my own, and I can also mentor those and some skills along the way. I'm delighted to do that.

Your new book is The Millennial's Guide To the Universe. It's on Amazon. We'll have a link on the show page. How do people get ahold of you? What would you like to have them do?

Natalie Elisha: They can absolutely email me at natalie@elishalaw.com. Follow me on Instagram, which is [natalie_elishat_tv](#). I would just love to work in partnership with people who resonate with this message. With corporations who want to implement an amazing millennial force. It's not one person. It's not you or me, Mark. It's the collective.

Mark S A Smith: That's right.

Natalie Elisha: It is the masses that have to shift in order for this to start happening, and we all agree and understand that things need to change.

Mark S A Smith: Things will change. It's inevitable. It's unstoppable. Deal with it.

Natalie Elisha: Yeah, and change is great. Change is awesome.

Mark S A Smith: It is.

Natalie Elisha: Let's get excited, right? This is really amazing.

Mark S A Smith: It is inevitable, friends. Are you going to have some fun, or are you going to be feeling miserable? I suggest having fun.

Natalie Elisha: We're all going to die anyway, Mark. Let's have some fun while we're still here.

Mark S A Smith: I'm with you on that.

Natalie Elisha: Spoken like a true estate attorney.

Mark S A Smith: I love it. Thanks for being a great guest. It's been a real joy. Thanks, Natalie.

Natalie Elisha: Mark, thank-you so much. I'm so grateful, and it's been an absolute blast.