MAXINE: [00:00:07] Hello again. I'm Maxine, bringing you this latest episode of the "Talks at Google" podcast, where great minds meet. "Talks at Google" brings the world's most influential thinkers, creators, makers, and doers all to one place. Every episode of this podcast is taken from a video that can be seen at YouTube.com/TalksatGoogle. In this episode, we're excited to bring you our conversation with Mayim Bialik, star of "The Big Bang Theory." Mayim talks to us about her latest book, "Girling up: How to be Strong, Smart, and Spectacular." In it, she puts her real-life PhD to work, talking to teens about the science of growing up and getting ahead. We hear how growing up as a girl in today's world is no easy task juggling family, friends, romantic relationships, social interests, and school, but Mayim is at hand to provide information and inspiration. In conversation with Googler Jamie Green, here is Mayim Bialik, "Girling up: How to be Strong, Smart, and Spectacular." [00:01:07]

JAMIE GREEN: Thank you so much for joining us.

MAYIM BIALIK: Thanks for having me.

JAMIE GREEN: Of course. So, to start things off, the book is called "Girling up," and the subtitle of the book is "How to be Strong, Smart, and Spectacular. Why those three qualities?

MAYIM BIALIK: So the book is written for girls 10 to 18 and anyone who ever was a girl 10 to 18 or knows a girl 10 to 18. And we wanted a subtitle because it's fun to have one, and there's a reason that it's not, you know, "How to be Saucy, Sassy, and Sexy." The qualities that I am trying to support and give a voice to are those of strength and intelligence and, you know, sort of a whimsical, eccentric notion of being spectacular, which, you know, can be different things [00:02:07] for different girls. But, also kind of, you know, to speak to that as well, when we first saw ideas for covers, you know, they kind of wanted to do, like, "Ooh, here's Mayim thinking," you know? Like, "pretty head shot with glasses." And those were lovely photos, but I really said no. I want it to look like more my personality. I want to be in a cape and converse. So there you go. I'm in a cape with converse. And we really wanted it to feel not like a feminine--I specifically said it doesn't have to be pink. There is nothing biological about females that makes us want the color pink. I actually never liked the color pink and still don't. So I like that it's kind of bold and quirky, and, you know, we have some science-y symbols, and it kind of feels appropriate for strength and smartness and spectacularness.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah. What inspired you to write a book for girls and people who know them and have been them?

MAYIM BIALIK: [00:03:07] You know, it's funny because the three books that I have written, I was not inspired to write them. I was approached, and this isn't just like people being nice to celebrities like, "you should write a book." Like I was specifically approached. "Will you write this book?" And I've been asked to put my face on several books. Many? Several? I don't know. My book agent's here, so I can't lie. But enough books of, like, "Will you be the face of this science book for girls?" And it didn't really feel right because science is super broad, and I know how people feel about celebrity books. I totally do because I feel that way too. Did they really write it? Is it authentic? Is it really gonna be meaningful? And this book came about because--so I have a website called Grock Nation, and I write essays about all sorts of things, and one of the things that I wrote about is--there was an episode of "Big Bang Theory" where Sheldon and Amy have coitus for the first time, [00:04:07] and I wrote an article about what it was like to not only play a late bloomer on television but to be a late bloomer in real life and how, you know, both Jim and I kind of felt like, "Gosh, this is a really intimate moment, you know, that we're sharing

with potentially millions of people." And I just wrote, you know, kind of a thoughtful, nerdy essay about some of that conflict of boundaries and where my intimate brain ends and where this character's begins. And Jill Santopolo, who's an editor at Penguin, reached out to me, and she said, "I saw your article on Grok Nation, and I would like you to write a book with this kind of voice that has a notion of modesty without being religious or political." And I said, "Well, that's very kind, but can we do more?" And so I took my inspiration, actually, from Natalie Angier, who is a science writer for "The New York Times." And she wrote a book called "Woman, An Intimate Geography." And what it was was actually a kind of cross-species comparison of how other mammals and other animals do things versus how women do, [00:05:07] but it really was a full geography of being a woman. And so I said to Jill, "what if I basically did a version of that about the full female experience? And instead of using other species as examples, I use other cultures in a lot of places. And, because I'm trained as a scientist, I go from chromosomes and hormones, through sex and dating, to how our brains learn, how our bodies get fed and nurtured, and, because it is a book on the 21st-century, how we deal with difficult things--mental health issues, eating disorders, depression, abuse, things like that. And then the final chapter is how we make a difference in the world and encouraging young girls to think in an age-appropriate way. No one ever told me to do any of these things. It's also really why I decided that I should write this book. My mom didn't really talk to me about any of this stuff, body stuff, anything like that. My mom came from a very conservative religious household, and, yeah. These things just weren't talked about, and I wish someone had talked to me about all of these things, so I wrote a book [00:06:07] so that other girls can hear about these things.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah, and, like you said, it covers a ton. And I'm curious, you know, you said no one ever really talked to you about this stuff when you were a kid. If you could give this book to 12-year-old Mayim, what chapter would you point her to first?

MAYIM BIALIK: Well, you know, there's a reason I put the chapters in the order that I did. I think starting with chapter one is a good place, but there's a lot. There is a lot in there.

JAMIE GREEN: Or, I guess, what did she need most?

MAYIM BIALIK: Oh, what did she need most? That feels like something my therapist would ask me. What 12-year-old Mayim needed most--honestly, I think the chapter about intimacy, which, obviously, includes sex and dating, which I was not ready to think about even at 16 or 17. But some of the stuff about the way that we form intimate relationships with other people, even that are not romantic, would have been helpful. You know, I included a section about how to tell if someone is not a good friend. And, literally, [00:07:07] no one ever said that to me. It was just like I'd come home crying and, "She said this about me." And my mother would be like, "I don't know what to do. Don't be friends with them." So it occurred to me what if we lay out guidelines for how people should treat each other and the expectations you can have? And, of course, it's not always gonna be like that. I mean, I was already the kid who talked like a grownup when I was 12. It didn't make me very popular. But, no, I think that that chapter, ultimately, would've been very helpful in terms of all kinds of intimacy because intimacy is--those are the relationships we have with our family and with our friends. It's not just the scary ones.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah.

MAYIM BIALIK: Sorry.

JAMIE GREEN: Still even thinking of them as the scary ones, right?

MAYIM BIALIK: Yeah, exactly. I'm 41, and it's still scary.

JAMIE GREEN: Totally. Talking about the fact that, when you were 12, you were already sort of talking like an adult, what was it like writing a book with all of this really big subject matter, including science and psychology, [00:08:07] and all of this stuff, aiming it at children? Was that hard?

MAYIM BIALIK: Yeah. I should also point out-- would like to apologize to my publicist, Heather Besignano. I forgot to take the Band-Aids off my pinky toes, and they are showing. So I wouldn't want anyone to look and say, "Ha, ha, Mayim's wearing Band-Aids." I was wearing very high, high heels before, and my toes were hurting, and, Heather, I'll take off the Band-Aids later.

JAMIE GREEN: How to wear high heels is something I have still never learned.

MAYIM BIALIK: I figured you'll understand. There are Band-Aids on my pinky toes. But I didn't want someone to think, "She doesn't know there are Band-Aids." I know. I'm sorry.

JAMIE GREEN: It's real. It's real life.

MAYIM BIALIK: This is totally--yeah, we're very real right now. How did it feel? It was difficult. You know, I'm a person who loves words. I love language. I remember many S.A.T. words and use them often, and I really had to write a book without my full vocabulary. I was allowed to use--or I needed to use my full intellectual and emotional vocabulary, but I had to do it with words that would make sense for a 10-18-year-old audience. And, in addition, you know, [00:09:07] you can't just say that things are great over and over because you can't use all of your other adjectives. You can't be like, "Everything's great. The brain's great. Hormones are great." You have to find other ways to explain things. My 11-year-old son was my first proper proofreader, and he didn't like chapter one at all because there are a lot of diagrams of the woman's body. He wasn't interested in that at all. So that was not his favorite chapter, but I really just wanted just to know from him does it flow? It is interesting? Do I sound like a scolding mom? And he's like, "You are a scolding mom." But, objectively speaking, he said it felt right to him, and there are things that were interesting. Not those diagrams.

JAMIE GREEN: Right. And you have two sons, right?

MAYIM BIALIK: Yeah. 8 and 11. Those aren't their names, although many Hollywood people name their children things like that.

JAMIE GREEN: Can you talk a little bit about the decision to write a book for girls while you have sons? I'm not saying like, "Why didn't you write a book for your own kids?"

MAYIM BIALIK: Believe me, I have been asked that.

JAMIE GREEN: But I am more interested in just, you know, [00:10:07] raising sons, there are also conversations that you must have to have with them about girls and their own bodies and growing up as boys. I'm just curious how you've been thinking about that.

MAYIM BIALIK: Yeah, I've gotten this question asked in many productive ways and several unproductive ways. You know, in the world of social media, you see all sorts of questions like, literally, "Why would you write a book for girls? Why not for boys?" To which I responded--well I did. I responded to that

comment. Or, "What gives you the authority?" I said, "Well, I'm a female." That's where we'll start. I was a girl. Now I'm a woman. I chose to write this book largely because of Jill approaching me about kind of the specific voice about being a female and the fact that I grew up in the limelight--you know, I was on "Blossom" from the time I was 14 to 19, and I started acting when I was 11. [00:11:07] So, you know, I grew up in some very critical years really in the public eye. And, although standards for women were different then, and there wasn't social media, and there wasn't the publicity machine directed around women, in particular--I think that puts a lot of pressure on us--I definitely had a notion of being on display as a woman in a culture that I don't always find friendly to women. So that, I think, was part of the perspective that I wanted to bring to "Girling up." And the fact is, I dedicated this book to my boys because, really, everything I do as their mother--and they will meet women in their lives who, hopefully, if I haven't read this book, will have read other books that empower them and make them believe in the values of knowing more about yourself and making an impact in the world. And, you know, people get very--certain people--get very uppity when they hear that I'm a feminist or that I'm raising feminist children, and I'm not a person who hates men. [00:12:07] I actually quite like men. And I'm not raising my boys to be afraid of masculinity. I mean, I think a lot of people just literally don't know the definition that feminism is a movement that believes in the unique role of women to break the bonds of race, class, and gender. My sons understand that, and there is information in this book about boys' bodies as well as girls' bodies, and much of what is in this book applies to males as well as females. So, yeah, I speak to my children about hormones. They know about gender fluidity because they hear it in the news, and you know, we just used to call it "Mama's boyish." Like, "Why does Mama like sports cars, and Dada doesn't? You know, "Dada likes musical theater just because." Because everybody's different. So they've already had a lot of these conversations, but, you know, I think it's okay for us to acknowledge that, you know, for most of human history, women have been excluded from a lot of the workplace and have been denied a lot of the rights that men had, and it's okay to say that we want to have this kind of book. [00:13:07] There are books for boys. There will continue to be books for boys. Men have written most of the books in human history, if you kind of look at a bell curve of it, you know? And I really feel like it's totally okay to also acknowledge that, you know, the male body is very different from the female body, and the fact that, you know, the male genitalia is on the outside is a lot more informative than women's bodies, where everything is protected. So there's a lot to know about what's going on in there. As well, of course, there are exceptions to all of these things, but women are a very verbal and social creature, and there is a lot that we're not encouraged to talk about and bring out. And I think men are seeing that too. You know, men can be emotional, and we need to talk about all of those things. But I also don't feel like one should have to defend a special book for girls. I feel like we're in a safe place here.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah.

MAYIM BIALIK: I feel like I'm not being attacked yet.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah. Yet. I'll just turn the page to the attack questions. So you've written three books. [00:14:07] You write essays and articles and all sorts of stuff, and you're very outspoken, as we' just seen. With your--

MAYIM BIALIK: Oh, that was just a warm-up.

JAMIE GREEN: Actually, I read in another interview with you that you were saying that, growing up Jewish, you were raised in an argumentative tradition.

MAYIM BIALIK: Yes.

JAMIE GREEN: I was like "Yes!"

MAYIM BIALIK: Well, if you want to get fancy, you can call it the dialectic tradition, but that's only in philosophy class. two JAMIE GREEN: As opposed to just shouting.

MAYIM BIALIK: Being Jewish, right.

JAMIE GREEN: When you're out to dinner with your family it's just like oh over there.

MAYIM BIALIK: Exactly.

JAMIE GREEN: But you have a very strong and specific worldview, and you live that in your--all of your life choices.

MAYIM BIALIK: Sorry, I'm caught. Everything's fine.

JAMIE GREEN: Okay. You know, with your Jewish faith and being begin and all of this stuff. And I'm curious how you approached writing a book that would be inviting and accessible and helpful to girls from a wide range of backgrounds and of their own beliefs and their families' beliefs while still being true to your own. [00:15:07]

MAYIM BIALIK: Yeah. I mean, this is a great question because it's a great challenge. You know, when writing this kind of thing, especially because I was approached really because Jill, this editor at Penguin--because Jill really liked this voice that I had, which is really one of social conservativism. Which, you can be socially conservative even if you're a bleeding-heart liberal. I promise. Here I am. But I wanted to make sure that it didn't feel like a partisan book. I happen to believe in a certain kind of politics, and I happen to believe in a certain religious tradition, and one of the ways that I talk about--that historically people cope, you know, in the chapter on how we cope is by structured organized activities, some of which are religious in nature. But I really tried to kind of, at every turn, say, "Even if this doesn't work for you, here are some of the advantages of people congregating regularly in a community setting." [00:16:07] Just to, again, sort of give information that can then be used to make decisions. And I think, you know, a lot of times you get knee-jerk reactions, or I respond in a knee-jerk fashion, really, for much of these years, so I think being presented lots of different options is healthy. And, also, presenting information in a way that there are many options is helpful. But, for me, in the chapter on basically nutrition and what we eat and how our body is fueled by that, I do talk about my personal choices. Yes, I happen to be vegan. But I make it really clear, and it's really true. I know that being vegan is not for everyone. You know, we all know that every major medical organizations says we all should eat less processed foods and less meat and animal byproducts, but I didn't want that to be an agenda of the book. You know, I wrote a vegan cookbook for God's sake. If you want an agenda book, that's it. But I do think it's also important to look at all aspects of these kinds of angles, and I did talk about how many young girls, and, yes, some young boys as well, [00:17:07] but many young girls are adopting a vegetarian or vegan diet as a way to lose weight. And that's actually not the purpose. Yes, some people do tend to lose weight. You can also gain weight as a vegetarian or vegan. But I made sure to also point to some of the larger issues because, again, those are things that weren't really talked about, and it is important for us to talk about them. And it's, you know, the kind of thing that feels yucky. When you hear of a friend's daughter or a niece or whatever who is having eating problems and it's being couched

in eating preferences, those are complicated things, but I really think it's healthy to get it out there. I hope that it is.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah, and it's so tricky to talk about because, on the one hand, any kind of restrictive eating can be a signal of something very dangerous.

MAYIM BIALIK: Yeah, but I was raised kosher, so it's like you know. We have thousands of years of restrictions.

JAMIE GREEN: Right. But when a young girl starts taking that on, it's tied in with all of this other sort of baggage, but it can also--you know, I know people who started eating vegetarian or vegan for health [00:18:07] or sort of vague restrictive reasons and then, along the way, discover other reasons and sort of pack on the principles as you go.

MAYIM BIALIK: Yeah, that was kind of my story as well.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah. But back to the, I guess, the sort of conservatism--the idea of being sort of conservative while also a bleeding-heart liberal, you mention modesty earlier. Ad one of the things that really intrigued me in the book, actually, was your mention of not modesty in the acknowledgments. You thank two women who I think are both rabbis, right?

MAYIM BIALIK: Remind me.

JAMIE GREEN: I didn't write their names down.

MAYIM BIALIK: Is it Wendy Shalit? Wendy Shalit wrote "A Return to Modesty." I'm pretty sure I acknowledged her.

JAMIE GREEN: Be to hold on. Hold on.

MAYIM BIALIK: This is fun.

JAMIE GREEN: Tell us who she is while I look this up.

MAYIM BIALIK: Well, Wendy Shalit is an author, who wrote "A Return to Modesty." She's not a rabbi I, but she wrote a book about sort of the reclaiming that a lot of women are doing, not necessarily in a religious manner, [00:19:07] but to reclaim the notions of having choices about what they wear and how they wear it. Did you find it?

JAMIE GREEN: I did find it.

MAYIM BIALIK: Was I close?

JAMIE GREEN: I think you mentioned--

MAYIM BIALIK: I think Wendy Shalit is mentioned in the chapter.

JAMIE GREEN: I think you mention that book in the--

MAYIM BIALIK: Right. Here it comes.

JAMIE GREEN: And so here it was Haviva Kohl and Allison Josephs.

MAYIM BIALIK: Oh, both of whom are not rabbis. This is why it wasn't sounding familiar. Yeah, Allison Josephs is an online presence. She goes by "Jew in the City." She was actually--I met her through "Partners in Torah," which is a free organization that sets you up with someone who can teach you really anything you want to know about Judaism. And one of the main things that--and she's literally--I mean, I don't want to say she's just a mom, but she's not a Jewish educational professional. At that time, she and I were both new moms. She ended up developing an online presence and website, educating people on modern orthodoxy. But anyway, that's who Allison Josephs is, and one of the things we studied through partners in Torah was modesty and why Jewish women have rules and what the rules are for Jewish men. Haviva Kohl is a rebbetzin, which means she's married to a rabbi. And she was the woman--awkward--she was the woman [00:20:07] that I studied with before I got married. So, in traditional Jewish weddings--this may sound strange. Women typically study things about being married with women, and men typically study things about being married with men. And, if you've ever heard of a mikvah, which is a ritual bath, that is a spiritual and legal place that you immerse, think of a really holy Jacuzzi. It's like that. I studied all of the rules. There are thousands of years of tradition surrounding the use of that ritual and tradition, and it was something I've written about very publicly because I found it very comforting to have that as a monthly ritual. Typically, Jewish women go after their menstrual cycle ends. And it is not because we're dirty or horrible, which is what a lot of people assume. But I found it very empowering. And I do identify [00:21:07] as a feminist who is part of the structure of patriarchy in that I am part of a Jewish tradition, which is, you know, patriarchal in its origins. But yeah. That was a lot. Is everyone okay? I feel like I may have hurt someone. Okay.

JAMIE GREEN: You like what do I ask next?

JAMIE GREEN: Well, no. I actually--I'm gonna continue the questions. I still have a question.

MAYIM BIALIK: Then yes, this is what it's like to date me. This is literally--this problem and what just happened is what it's like.

JAMIE GREEN: It's not a problem.

MAYIM BIALIK: Are we dating?

JAMIE GREEN: I don't know.

MAYIM BIALIK: So the two women I thanked.

JAMIE GREEN: The two women you thank. And you write that "They taught me the ways of decorum, modesty, and grace, and the ancient origins of these gifts have increased my concepts of worth, dignity, and the divine ability to love and be loved." I thought that was so lovely.

MAYIM BIALIK: that is kind of lovely. I forgot that I wrote that.

JAMIE GREEN: You wrote it. Can you talk a little bit about what that means?

MAYIM BIALIK: [00:22:07] Yeah. I think that, you know--you picked one of the most intimate "thank yous," besides my ex-boyfriend and my ex-husband, who are also thanked in there. I think that, for me, you know, I came late to observance. I was not raised religious. My mother was raised Orthodox and very, very old world. Her parents were immigrants. She didn't speak English in her home. They only spoke Yiddish, so she kind of raised me Reform, meaning she didn't want a lot of ritual. And, when I was

in college, I took on more observance. And one of the things that was very empowering for me was to meet women who did not feel oppressed and, also, women who didn't simply say "I'm part of the patriarchy, therefore I don't feel oppressed." These were intelligent, college-educated women--which, you don't have to be going to college to be educated, but you know what I mean. This wasn't the stereotype of the woman who went and got married at 17 and never saw the outside world [00:23:07]. These were women who had lived in an integrated society and who were gorgeous, felt empowered in how they presented themselves, and I'm not gonna to pretend that--there are many women who want to be modest and still be attractive. Honestly, Allison dresses and clothing that I would feel uncomfortable in because it's too tight, but it's very--you know, for her, it's very modest, and it is modest by most standards. But, to meet women who had fulfilling lives as women, again, within this kind of religious structure was very comforting. And I found that the rules of, you know, it's--it's called family purity. It sounds better in Hebrew, I promise. I found that the rules governing marriage and love and intimacy really protected something that I believe is very sacred. And even though I am divorced, you know, I think that Mike, my ex, would agree. There were a lot of healthy boundaries, you know [00:24:07], in our relationship. And when I think about when I got pregnant, it was after visiting a spiritual ritual bath where I had a mystical experience of this notion of you can be reborn, you know, by immersing and having this experience. That's really--you know, that's pleasant, and it's bittersweet. I don't do that anymore because I'm not married. There are people who go to the ritual bath in other nontraditional ways, but for the kind of traditional person that I am, it really felt like something sacred in the context of my marriage, and I credit those women with really helping me find beauty in something that a lot of people consider just kind of a knee-jerk reaction, like, "that's sexist. That's awful." And I also feel like there are so many things, not only in religion, but in life as well. You know, it’s sort of easy to dismiss like that, but I chose to make a commitment to get educated about it, and, for me, it was very rewarding. I know not everyone would have that experience, and that's fine too.

JAMIE GREEN: We're gonna open it up for questions in a minute, so, if you have a question [00:25:07], please stand by one of the microphones in the aisle. But, before we get to that, the book gives a lot of advice to girls.

MAYIM BIALIK: Suggestions.

JAMIE GREEN: Suggestions. Some frameworks, some guidelines, if you want.

MAYIM BIALIK: A little bit.

JAMIE GREEN: Some ideas. Are there any suggestions, then, since you've spent so much time getting into the minds of girls between 10 and 18 and thinking about what they're going through, are there any suggestions that he would offer to parents of girls?

MAYIM BIALIK: Don't let your children have phones or leave the house. Does that work? That's kind of what it felt like.

JAMIE GREEN: You know that it doesn't.

MAYIM BIALIK: No, I know that it doesn't. No, I think that--well, I know that, for me, as a parent, I think, whether I had boys or had to girls, I do put a lot, and so does my Ex. We do put a lot of structure and boundaries around the kind of information our children have access to and knowing what they're doing. And, for us, that's comforting [00:26:07]. I think that a lot of parents, especially parents who are younger

than I am--because, I could easily--well, I'm 41, so do the math. You know, I could easily have a 20-year-old or older. I think a lot of parents in that sort of middle generation are sometimes nervous to not be friendly or be friends with their kid, and I think there's a lot of benefit to that. You know, I sort of was raised in a house where I didn't have a lot of voice because that's how people raised children back then, so I think that there's something in between that I would hope people find. But that being said, I think it's okay to say "no." And I think it's okay to say "Yeah, you're not ready for a phone." Which my 11-year-old is stomping his foot every other day at us. But I do think it's okay to say "I need your passwords. What are you doing on the computer? What are you watching?" And I also think [00:27:07] we shouldn't be afraid to upset children. Because, a lot of times, I think I'm sometimes afraid to make decisions because I am afraid, you know, that they'll feel controlled or they'll be mad at me, but I think it's very important for parents to know that--I hope that this book will kind of open up conversations in terms of TV time and screen-time and things like that. And, in terms of the sex and dating chapter, that's really going to vary by kid. I wasn't ready to learn that kind of information until much later on that. Much later.

JAMIE GREEN: All right, we have a question over here.

BIANCA: Hi. A couple of years ago, I read an article about pedophilia culture, and it talked about things like Brazilian waxes and calling women girls. And, at that time, I made the choice I am no longer going to call women girls, and I made that choice a couple of years ago, and it's always this conscious effort, and I've gotten comfortable with it myself [00:28:07], and I've gotten comfortable correcting someone when they refer to me as a girl. You know, "Google Girl Bianca," and I'm like, "No, Google Woman."

MAYIM BIALIK: That might be an alliteration issue, but I could be wrong. I defend your right to correct that.

BIANCA: But what I'm not yet comfortable doing is correcting people when they refer to other women as girls. And so you just posted a video about this-=

MAYIM BIALIK: That's much more fun, yeah.

BIANCA: On social media, which I really, really appreciated. And I hear this happening all the time. I hear my colleagues referring to other Google women as girls, I hear them referring to clients or agency partners as girls. And it bugs me, but I don't--I don't know how to address it. And so I have been saying nothing, and I would like to say something. And I would like your thoughts on how to address it.

MAYIM BIALIK: I didn't know where you were gonna go with that question. I am much more relaxed right now that I was 30 seconds ago. Phew! So, Bianca, is that your name?

BIANCA: Yes.

MAYIM BIALIK: What Bianca's referring to is--I make YouTube videos [00:29:07], and, you know, there's not necessarily a rhyme or reason as to why something goes viral, but we did have a video go viral for the first time. I think it has 9.6 million views or something. And it was about why we shouldn't call women girls. Then I released "Science and Religion" about my lack of conflict there. And that went viral the next week. We had a big month. It was a very big month. That was funny because this is something I have been ranting about since I was 14 years old. This is just something that's always really bothered me. And the video was originally longer because, believe me, I got a lot of comments of, "Why didn't you talk about this?" "What about this?" "What about the South?" "In Tennessee, there's a region where

men are called boys," all of these specific anecdotal exceptions that prove that I'm a horrible person. So, anyway, there originally was a part of that video that talked about exceptions in intimate settings, like "Hey, girlfriend," Things like that. But, you know, my creative partner and CEO, Emmanuel Shalev [00:30:07], is in charge of all edits, and he said this is what I want to do. But, I think, I actually hadn't thought about it in terms of pedophilia culture. This is literally what I'll be thinking about for the rest of the day and into the evening because I think that's really fascinating. I find it easier to correct other people, and I think that's really interesting, right? That we're two strong women who like red lipstick, and, for me, I have a really hard time correcting people. And it's funny because, I think, I might've been on "The View" this morning, and I think someone might have said--it would never occur to me to say, "I'm a woman." I couldn't do it. But the example I give is my publicist, who's here, you know, when people say, "She's such a great girl." That, for me, I really--and this is what I talked about in the video I say, "She's a woman." And doing it with a smile is something that, as women, sometimes helps. You don't always have to do it. But, as I said, people will hate you less to your face if you smile [00:31:07]. I think that, in terms of correcting other people, that's really how I do it. And I think it's important to realize that, although it should be, I think, remedied every single time, there also has to be some flexibility in how we approach things. Like I sometimes feel like it's my job to fix the whole world, but I also have to know that I'm part of it. And I also have to function in social situations, and sometimes--and I'm not saying like, "Oh, everybody wants me to strip naked at this party. I guess I should." I'm talking about being flexible in terms of there are times where I feel like you know what? If I'm this uncomfortable, and I know my convictions, and I know I want to behave, this may not be the time to do it. So I think that's important too to give yourself a break and know that you're not solely responsible. You have celebrities like me to take a general bullet for feminists everywhere and have everyone hate on me because of it. But I commend you for correcting it, and I will try to take some inspiration for you [00:32:07] and try and find creative ways to correct people. Maybe a snap might be good? Like "I'm a woman!" No? Okay, maybe not.

JAMIE GREEN: I didn't say anything.

MAYIM BIALIK: Feels good now.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah, it's great. We're done. Yes.

person: Can you talk about that other video that you did? The science and religion one? I thought it was amazing. It was very smart and just really beautiful and touching at the same time. So, maybe, what inspired it, and what was the reaction to it?

MAYIM BIALIK: So I'm a scientist. I'm trained as a neuroscientist, and I'm also a person of faith. And usually the people that ask if I've conflict about that typically are not scientists. They're not religious. And I like to point out that, sometimes, no insult to atheists or agnostics, but, sometimes, those people are more fanatical and religious about being atheist or agnostic than I am about being a religious person. And, you know, what I talked about in that video [00:33:07]--and, again, this is something I've been ranting about for 15 years. I have never felt conflict. I've never met other Orthodox or religious people who feel conflict. I've never met a scientist who believes that the world was literally created in six days, and then God rested on the seventh. There is a quote that my Rabbi used to quote a lot. "If you think that the Torah, the Old Testament, is a science book, I have better science books on my shelf." The Torah is a historical, religious, spiritual, mystical document. It is not meant to be a science book. And one of my favorite realizations that I had is that we can call it different things, this notion of faith, but if

someone has a belief that the sun will come up tomorrow, which I would say we can mostly all agree on, to me, that is the same faith as me believing that the universe is divine [00:34:07] and things like the sun coming up happen. And the fact that, when the sun comes, up I come from a religious and ethnic tradition where we thank God for that happening, for a lot of people, the way that they acknowledge that is simply to have their alarm go off and get up. And I don't have a right to pass judgment on how people choose to commemorate the divine act of the sun coming up. It was kind of like Neil deGrasse Tyson says, you know, science is great because you don't have to believe in it for it to be true. I kind of feel that way about a mystical notion of something divine in the universe, you know? I don't have to believe that the sun's gonna come up. It's gonna come up. And, for me, I don't feel conflict about that. Everything I've ever learned in the scientific world has made me appreciate the divinity of the universe. I have never once said "Gosh, the eye is so complicated. It had to be created by God." I don't even have to think like that. The eye is so unbelievable because it exists in the context of a universe that is ruled by physics and chemistry and all of the things that humans have to give names to. And, really, the same thing applies for religion and for God. [00:35:07] You know, those are concepts that exist whether we name them or not. It doesn't matter what language you say it in. The fact that we call the number six the number six--those are all just arbitrary linguistic classification for things that literally exist. So, for me, it just feels like all's good in the neighborhood of science and God.

person: But I like how you also related that wonder in the world to internal--

MAYIM BIALIK: Yeah, I got all emotional recording it. Like, that was for real. It's emotional.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah. No, it is. And we do have time for one or two more questions, if anyone else wants to come to the mic.

MAYIM BIALIK: No one wants to ask questions. Just you and me.

JAMIE GREEN: Well, I have more, but--yes, go ahead.

NAYIMA: I'll ask a question. Hi. I'm Nayima. The question was how do you balance being a social conservative with being a free liberal?

MAYIM BIALIK: You know, I think it's funny because this is something I am asked a lot. I think--I'm not trying to be facetious. I just am. So the fact that I don't like to wear sleeveless or strapless dresses [00:36:07] or that I prefer that no one see me in a bathing suit, the fact that I make distinctions about the way I present myself as a woman and that I find that empowering, to me, that is absolutely in no conflict with the fact that we should not use the death penalty. Like, I am 100% certain in my mind that we should not kill people. And, for me, I was raised--my parents were civil rights activist, and they were--actually they were part of the integration of the public school system here in New York, and my grandparents were immigrants. You know, I was raised as a union supporter. Liberal values work for me all the way around. As a Jewish person, for most of Jewish history in America, we have aligned ourselves with the Democratic Party because the principals of welcoming the stranger, and upholding the fallen, and healing the sick is really part of what I believe my religious tradition dictates. But the fact that I don't necessarily want to see everyone's breasts and butt cheeks in my life every day [00:37:07], but, in Los Angeles, that's kind of what it's like. You know, if I had daughters, I would be a very conservative parent in terms of dress. When my children--I go to synagogue. Much as I believe that religion shouldn't be a thing that children hate because you have to wear stuffy clothing, I do believe in a notion of decorum

that way. I'm old-fashioned. That's what people say. I like domestic things. I like cooking, cleaning, and sewing. Any time I have ever been in a romantic relationship, my favorite thing is to, like, "What kind of pie I can make?" I'm just that kind of person. I also will make pie that I like as well. Don't worry. But those things get kind of put in that social conservative sort of box. But, you know, someone sort of pointed out. I was on--what show was that? Was it “James Corden”? Heather? I don't know if she's still here. Yeah, was it “James Corden” where I flashed Piers Morgan with my tatas? Okay. I was on James Corden, and Piers Morgan was on. And he's someone that I sometimes agree with but largely don't. And Susan Sarandon had just done that in memoriam thing [00:38:07], and Piers Morgan was super critical and felt like tweeting about how her breasts shouldn't have been hanging out. And this is a great intersection of my universes, where I was really annoyed at Piers Morgan because there are definitely more important things to think about and Susan Sarandon's breasts. Would I agree that, if you're doing a memoriam, and I'm thinking more about your cleavage than the dead people, sure, it's awkward. But what I did was I turned my back to the camera, and I flashed Piers Morgan. I was wearing a bra, you know. There was coverage, fine. But someone pointed out, you know, that was, like, an intersection of my rebellious feminism. I didn't do it to the camera. I turned my back. Still not okay, I'm sure, by a lot of people standards. But, when I feel, like, how do you combine them? You just do. And there's no hard-and-fast rules. Someone pulled up a picture that was taken. I did a photo shoot in Israel. I'm wearing a sheer top, and, yes, you can see cleavage because I'm wearing whatever. I'm wearing a sheer top. And people were so quick to say "Ha, ha, caught you." And I'm like really? Is this the world that we live in that people are trolling [00:39:07] to find pictures where I violate certain notions of modesty to prove that I'm--I've never said that I do anything perfectly, but I definitely think that the death penalty should not be allowed. Thank you.

JAMIE GREEN: You do a perfect job of not killing people.

MAYIM BIALIK: That's right. I perfectly don't want people to die.

JAMIE GREEN: Well--

MAYIM BIALIK: That way. Oh, no. I mean, sometimes people die. It happens. But--too soon to talk about death, apparently.

JAMIE GREEN: Always. But it also sounds like one of the differences is that you're not imposing your views. You're not saying that the laws of the country should be written on your views.

MAYIM BIALIK: I have feelings about the laws of the country. But yes. My laws of the country, I think, should opt for more freedom, more acceptance, more rights, civil rights, human rights, rights for women, rights for gays, rights for trans people. Yeah. I'm all for that. Yes, and rights for criminals and rights for murderers, because, again, I'm an old-fashioned supporter of those kinds of rights [00:40:07]. And, you know, if I were in politics or if I had a Facebook page with a lot of followers, I would probably take a lot of stances, and I choose to. But I think it's very difficult. There are certain arenas where I get to say I'm vegan you don't have to be. However, if you want to talk about economics and the environment and our impact on the environment, then maybe we should have a conversation about veganism. We all should. And I think that's how I feel. I don't understand--I don't want to talk about--I mean, we can talk about politics if people want to, but I literally don't understand what's happening, really, anymore. And I don't understand a lot of places where and how we can affect change. Why I, as a celebrity, why anyone should care what I think. And I understand. I have that conflict myself. Why do I do this? Why do I write?

Why do I share this on a platform with millions of people? And I think I kind of decided that this is a new world. There really aren't rules for what happens when a celebrity [00:41:07] has 2 million followers and has the power to say if you believe in the right for women to choose what to do with their wombs, you may want to check out Planned Parenthood or the ACLU or the Anti-Defamation League. It's a hard place to be, and I also don't want people to think that I do that cavalierly.

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah.

MAYIM BIALIK: You can say cavalierly, right?

JAMIE GREEN: Yeah.

MAYIM BIALIK: Or in a cavalier fashion.

JAMIE GREEN: That S.A.T. skill's coming out again.

MAYIM BIALIK: Oh, yeah. Cavalier.

JAMIE GREEN: I think we have one more question.

DARCY: Yeah, thanks so much for being here. I'm very excited to read your book. I'm Darcy. I was curious to know more about your writing process for this book. Specifically, anything about the writing process, but I was curious if you talked with girls 10 to 18 as you were writing? And, also, if there was anything that you thought about putting in the book that you didn't end up putting in.

MAYIM BIALIK: That baby wants to know. This is a good question. So you asked about the writing process. What was the second thing?

DARCY: Oh, if you talked with--

MAYIM BIALIK: If I talked with--so, yeah, I'm a bad student [00:42:07] in this sense because Jill Santopolo was like, "Here are some teen websites that you should read to know how teens talk." I'm glad she's not here. I didn't look at them. And, honestly, I don't want to say I didn't want to talk to it 10-18-year-old girls, but, in my arrogance and grandiose fashion as a writer, I really felt like I had this. And I know girls in this age range. My son being 11, I have friends whose daughters are the same age, and, so, I know plenty of girls. We had a babysitter, and I watched her go from 15 to 18. But, no, I'm gonna be super honest. I didn't feel that it was necessary. And I don't just mean that because I have a PhD and, you know, in neuroscience, I get to say whatever I want. I will say, also--and I give credit to the women we had review the book. We had a school counselor, a neuropsychologist, a pediatrician, and an OB-GYN review the book [00:43:07]. Yeah, there were things about how I think that the pill is overprescribed for girls and that we have a crisis of the treatment of hormones in young women. That was removed from the book. I'm just gonna go ahead and say it. Yeah, I mentioned Ricki Lake prominently and the work that she has done to advocate for natural birth and for education about the overprescription of the pill, and I got some--where's Anthony Montero? I got some healthy pushback--not from Anthony Montero--I got some healthy pushback about that. That surprised me because I know so many young women who are put on the pill before their bodies even know what they're doing hormonally, especially girls in underserved populations, where they are not getting follow-up care, and no one cares because, sorry, "We don't care about poor people," is the message that a lot of girls get. So that I was kind of surprised about. And, in terms of the writing process, so, you know, my dad, bless his memory, was a writer

[00:44:07]. I've always been a creative writer, and even though I got a degree in neuroscience, I minored in Hebrew and Jewish studies because it helped keep my GPA up because I could write a really good essay. I got an A+ in the Third Reich and the Jews because I wrote so many great essays about the Third Reich. No, but my writing skills are really more in kind of essay form. Writing a book is very, very different. And, for this book, I literally took a piece of paper for every category of our existence, meaning, you know, sex and dating, hormones and puberty. And then I took post-its, and I wrote questions that I would have wanted answered for each of those categories, and I wrote them on post-its. So each of piece of paper had a dozen Post-Its, then, the way that started writing is I started answering those questions. That's literally the way the book was written. I started answering those questions, and I crossed it off. I'm a list maker. I'm a Post-It lover, so this was a very gratifying experience. You know, and pretty Sharpie, different colors for each chapter. So that's what it was like, and I carried those pieces of paper [00:45:07] around with me. I actually just finished a screenplay, and I wrote in a very similar fashion. That I did buy large notecards laid on a hotel bed. And I locked myself in a room and wrote a screenplay. But yeah, this book was very similar, and I did take time away. I'm really a person who loves the writing process. I love to be--literally I lock myself in a hotel room. I open the door only to get French fries and green salad and, you know, beers or like a little wine at dinner. But that's really how I wrote this book, and I went away and didn't talk to anyone, and it was great. And I just sat in the room, and that's when I was told you were a writer, when you love being in a room by yourself with the bottle of red wine and a bowl of pasta and some French fries.

JAMIE GREEN: And the thing you're writing.

MAYIM BIALIK: And the thing you're writing, yeah. No one else. Just me.

JAMIE GREEN: All right, well that's all the time we have for today.

MAYIM BIALIK: This was really fun. Thank you, everybody.

JAMIE GREEN: Thank you so much.

MAXINE: Thanks for listening. If you have any feedback about this or any other episode, we'd would love to hear from you [00:46:07]. You can visit g.co/TalksatGoogle/podcastfeedba ck to leave your comments. To discover more amazing content, you can always find us online at YouTube.com/TalksatGoogle or via our Twitter handle, @GoogleTalks. Talk soon.