



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 021 – A Wellness Conversation with Dr. Robyn McIntyre
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Welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robynson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

Welcome to Episode 21. There's such a spectrum of approaches in the health and wellness industry, ranging from the medical profession to the esoteric. It's rare and very refreshing to find someone who is classically trained in medicine, yet has evolved toward lifestyle medicine, which means using the way we live as a means of preventing and treating disease.

Our guest today is Dr. Robyn McIntyre, a New Zealand and Australian trained family physician with more than 30 years of experience, a kind bedside manner, and a holistic, yet scientifically proven approach. Robyn will tell you more about herself in her work during our conversation.

Dr. Robyn and I have been co-presenting at a number of webinars for different organizations. And we'll be sharing with you what we've shared with those audiences. Among the things we'll explore is how we naturally move toward a state of wellness, what can impact wellness, and some strategies for enhancing wellness.



There's also a little teaser at the end, an invitation to join us in implementing some of these strategies to help keep us all accountable. Details to follow on the next Wellness Wednesday episode, which is Episode 22.

We end this episode with our Dose of Inspiration segment where Robyn shares some of the things that are lighting her up these days. And as always, I'll put links to those items in the show notes. Now onto the show. I hope you enjoy the conversation.

Kathy: Dr. Robyn, welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast.

02:20

Robyn: Thanks, Kathy, it's great to be here.

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Kathy: So could you share with our audience a bit about who you are and what you do?

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Robyn: Well, I'm a New Zealand and Australian trained family physician, mental health counselor and public health practitioner with over 30 years experience in those areas. And I now live in the USA since 2014. In normal times, I would be returning to Australia to work for two periods of several weeks a year as a general practitioner. That, of course, is not going to happen at the moment. These are not normal times.

But through my work I've come to believe in lifestyle medicine. So that's using the way we live as a means of preventing and even treating disease. And I've developed a business here in the States as a health coach doing that. So I advocate evidence based



scientifically proven approaches which are individualized to my client's needs and aims. And I work one on one consultations to help people identify their health goals, help formulate approaches to achieving these, and then hopefully keep them on track.

03:33

Kathy: Perfect, thank you so much. And as a bit of background for our audience, you and I met just as our respective businesses were getting up and running. We have been meeting twice a month since 2019. We meet on Zoom and we've been accountability partners, keeping each other on track.

What's interesting is that aside from the brief introduction that you gave that I'm aware of, I don't know a whole lot about your backstory. So I think our audience would be interested, I sure would be, just knowing a little bit more about how you came into the wellness space. And in particular, was there a turning point that reoriented you from your traditional training to more of the wellness holistic approach you have today?

04:18

Robyn: Yeah, I think I could say there probably was a turning point without making it into too long a story, because I could. It really started with Jacques Cousteau, a very famous French marine explorer.

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Kathy: I wasn't expecting that.

04:37

Robyn: And he was one of the people that developed the scuba tank. So I loved his shows. I loved going boating and fishing with my father, I was a bit of a tomboy growing



up in New Zealand. And I decided I want to be a marine biologist. So I actually started down that track with a degree in zoology first off. But I pretty quickly realized that I wanted to keep my diving as a hobby and that I was actually more motivated by people and people's stories and helping them solve their health problems. I like to solve problems. So I changed direction and I became a family physician instead.

But I did a lot of sailing and diving around New Zealand. And I always had this itch to sail around the Pacific Islands. So in 1977, I sold my house and moved onto a boat. And then in '99, I left my very pleasant job as a general practitioner and a wonderful lifestyle on the very beautiful east coast of New Zealand to head off cruising around the Pacific Islands not really sure where it would lead me.

So I had various wonderful adventures. And in 2001, I ended up in the Marshall Islands, which is just over the equator in the North Pacific Ocean, about halfway between Hawaii and Guam. So they're tiny little islands really in the middle of nowhere. And I was very fortunate to get a job there working as a primary care physician for an American organization which was running a health program for the descendants of those affected by the US testing of nuclear bombs in the 1940s and the 1950s.

So it was really quite an extraordinary place and the whole thing was an amazing experience. I was there for a few years and this is where the turning point was for me. It was that it was really striking to see how these people had been affected by diseases of civilization. So they had come from very small communities, living on very small islands. They were active and they live mostly on fish and coconuts as their main food sources. And some of them stayed there, but many of them were moved to other places where they had much more sedentary lifestyles. And they were often supplied with processed foods and high fat protein sources such as frozen chicken and turkey tails.



They had terrible rates of heart disease, which were escalating all the time. And the diabetes was just awful. Some of the most severe effects were actually apparent when people were in the 20s and 30s: heart attacks, blindness, amputations, kidney failure. So we tried to supply diabetic medications. But a lot of the people didn't even have refrigerators, which you needed for the insulin. And a lot of them were pretty resistant to taking conventional medications. So there was nothing to help these people and it was really very disappointing and frustrating; it really felt a bit hopeless.

And it cemented my growing recognition that it was much more effective to prevent the development of these diseases in the first place then try to cure them. And to the credit of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Health, they were ramping up initiatives to address these lifestyle issues whilst I was there. But I undertook a Master of Public Health, which essentially is about preventative medicine remotely whilst I lived there and then I went on to work for UNICEF based in Suva, in Fiji, where I witnessed the same patterns as I traveled throughout the Pacific working as a medical officer for the organization.

And then in 2008, I moved to Australia to marry my American husband, Scott, who I initially had met sailing, and he was another fan of Cousteau, we're exactly the same age, but he actually used his interest to get a PhD in fish biology. And I returned to general practice in Australia with a renewed interest in health promotion and disease prevention. And everything I saw there in that developed country just confirmed all the ideas I'd had.

So when we moved here to the Florida Keys in 2014, that was for family reasons, it became an opportunity to learn more about the whole area of lifestyle medicine. And that's what has ultimately led to my work as a health coach.



09:18

Kathy: Wow, that was a great story! Thank you. Thank you for sharing it. So let's talk about what we want to share with the audience today.

Robyn: Sure.

Kathy: So to get going and give our listeners some context for the conversation. What do you say we start with the basics of wellness? Should I go first or would you like to?

09:39

Robyn: You go Kathy and I'll chime in.

09:42

Kathy: Okay, that sounds good. So if we take a step back and remind ourselves why wellness is even important, the reason why we want to feel that way, to feel good in our mind, our body and our spirit is so that we can do what lights us up with the people that we love. In other words, To fully enjoy our lives, to live a good life.

When I think of wellness, I think of the choices that we make and the actions we take. And it's one that evolves over time, right? This is really about lifestyle. When I think of the word well-being, to me, that's the experience of the positive wellness actions that we take. It's how we feel as a result of our choices and actions, feeling good, feeling happy, feeling joyful.

And then if I think about the characteristics of where we want to move directionally, which is toward optimal well-being, it goes beyond our physical and emotional



well-being, and it includes things like social well-being and life satisfaction. In other words, are we engaged with life? So that's the way I think about those three things.

10:53

Robyn: Sure, and I agree exactly with what you said. I have a definition that I like where wellness is described as a continual striving to live a life that is full, meaningful, zestful and exuberant. I like the liveliness of that definition.

And, you know, it seems to me that people are prepared to take more responsibility for their health these days, and are looking at good health as a way of achieving good immunity, which we all, of course, have had that in mind with recent events.

So Kathy, you and I have developed a model of holistic wellness which emphasizes the six components that we think contribute to achieving wellness holistically. And when we say holistically, we mean simply that wellness that considers the whole person. The model emphasizes that each of these six tenets is connected to the other five.

So let's explain this model a little bit more. The first three tenets are probably the most familiar, as you've just stated, mind, body, and spirit. And these are kind of inward looking on all parts of the individual. If we're being truly holistic, though, we also need to think about a second group of three which are outside of us. And these are the concentric spheres of family, community, and environment.

We need to remember that wellness is on a continuum. Our natural state of wellness is our central starting point. And we can move toward our optimal state of well-being by making good choices based on the holistic wellness model, or alternatively, in the other



direction to a state of chronically impaired wellness if we make choices destructive to our health.

12:48

Kathy: I love that idea of always moving toward a natural state of wellness and that it's our behaviors that can move us either toward an optimal state or away from that state. So let's talk about what can move us away from our natural state of wellness and how to work with life challenges.

13:10

Robyn: Sure, and of course, there are so many possible impacts on wellness. So let's just consider some. And as I go through these, maybe this will help listeners recognize factors that have impacted or currently impacting their own lives.

The first impact comes from life. The nature of life is that it's challenging, but of course, this is how we grow and develop as resilient human beings, where we are required to adapt to constant change. And life is not always fair. Some of us have bigger challenges to overcome than others. Of course, we all have life events that impact us that require our time and can shift us off our focus. We have bereavements, traumatic events in our lives, we might need to care for others, whether it's the elderly or our children, or perhaps disabled people in some way. We may suffer economic adversity. There are always relationship challenges. Physical and mental health issues can shift our direction. So these are simply the events of life that shape and mold us. And hopefully we learn to adapt to those challenges and head up into the optimal well-being zone despite them.



But you know, in recent times, the velocity of change has increased exponentially. And now we're all required to adapt and use new technology and innovations. For example, we've all seen the development of computers and now we almost all own a smart device of some kind, your own mini computer. It's a streaming device, it may be running our homes and our lives. And it's a communication device, so we're constantly on call.

So we live in a globalized world shrunk by rapid travel and by shared microbes and diseases, unfortunately, hyperstimulated by a 24/7 barrage of information that is doubling at increasing rates. So how do we keep up?

There are, of course, tremendous advantages for us and much of this technology. But it has also created so much change for us to adapt to: the way we work, the way we socialize, and just simply how we live.

So it can lead to challenges of remaining connected to who we really are, what we feel and our surroundings. It's a challenge to recognize when and what we need to eat for nourishment, when we're constantly offered tempting, cheap, instant choices which are available around the clock. We have to make up ways to make our bodies move because of our sedentary workstations and passive means of transport. Whereas once we would have been busy scouting for food or working fields, tending livestock or doing physical tasks, like washing dishes and floors, or chopping wood for heating, that's all done by machines now. So we can live comfortably in heated/air-conditioned houses or apartments with our food delivered, communicate remotely if we wish, never go outside and never truly connect with nature and the larger world.

16:33



In addition, I think many of us feel that the past year or so has been even more uncertain and out of our control. I know I felt it. The impacts have come from many directions, such as the increased awareness of social issues relating to racial and economic disparities, heightened divisiveness that has developed around politics, from catastrophic events we've seen including fires, multiple hurricanes, snowstorms in Texas. And that leads many of us to have increased concern and fearfulness of global warming.

As a society, we're thankfully emerging after a period of widespread losses relating to the pandemic. There's been bereavements, for many social isolation, that loss of freedom to travel and undertake some of the activities we enjoy, perhaps economic losses and unemployment for some, while others have needed to cope with big changes in their work conditions.

So as happens in the natural course of evolution, people have adapted found new ways to celebrate rites of passage events, like drive by graduation ceremonies, found new joy in just being at home, maybe gardening as I have done, or simple nature events in their neighborhoods like watching bird life, or even having no daily commutes. Many have found joy in that. So it feels as though we're going to be living in new ways, to some extent. And whilst change is always challenging. I think a lot of good can come from it for all of us. There's a lot to absorb, though.

18:14

Yeah, There sure is. And I agree with you. We'll start on this good note that I do believe that a lot of good can come from this. It's been remarkable to see how in this past year, how hundreds of millions of us, actually billions globally, how we've changed our habits overnight. And to me that shows our resolve and our resilience. And knowing that we've



adapted so quickly on a global basis really gives me optimism and hope for the future. As you mentioned, we've got some big challenges coming down the pike. And knowing that we can do this when we're called to it in a time of crisis, I think it's a great sign.

In my writing classes, I've shared a story that I heard from author Martha Beck, who describes these times as if a tsunami wave wiped out all of our known infrastructures, whether institutions, ways of being, like all the old got swept out to sea. And here we are on these little life rafts. And what we've known is gone. But we're not to the next destination yet. So we're kind of floating in this liminal space.

And so that takes me to the second part of what you were saying, which is, personally I agree, I think it's going to take us quite some time to sort through it all. We don't know what the impact of the mental and emotional turmoil that we've been through is yet and along with our daily life, our celebrations, our grieving rituals - everything has been disrupted. And how do we process not being with loved ones when they pass away? How do we work through life milestones that never were?

So I think that's why discussions like this are critical to let people know as we're coming out of this, you're not alone in how you're feeling, whatever that might be. There's a lot of external fear out there and it can be easy to get caught up in that negative cycle. But it's been my experience that you can work through this and find this sense of love and peace of mind and space, by looking internally.

So let's shift gears a bit and talk about wellness holistically. And then we'll give our listeners some practical takeaways. We're learning more and more about the interconnectivity of the different wellness components. Can you speak to that a bit, Robyn?



20:47

Robyn: Absolutely. There is a lot of interconnectivity and I've got a lovely example of that. I'm just going to talk about a couple of other principles with all these six different areas first, though, because we need to be addressing the six areas in a balanced way.

Doing well in one area alone is not going to achieve wellness. I might be great, for instance, at looking after my physical health, getting out exercising, eating well and getting adequate sleep. But I also need to feel connected and have the support of friends and or family to have good well-being.

It follows from this that the decisions we make are cumulative. So the more areas of our lives that are not ideal, the further we move away from achieving optimal health. If I have a desk job and I don't exercise and I'm drinking more alcohol than I should, or eating poorly, these will all move me incrementally away from good well-being. But on the other hand, if I'm overdoing one aspect that can be deleterious, too. So somebody who's over exercising, for instance, can cause themselves harm by reducing their immunity. Or if I'm a pro bono lawyer who works long hours at the job, making great community contributions, I need to recognize the sacrifices that I'm making to my overall well-being if this means I'm neglecting other areas of my life.

Also, our daily micro decisions are important as well as the larger decisions. So simply stopping for a two minute stretch after I've been working hard on the computer for some time really contributes to my health. All these small decisions will add up significantly to helping my well-being.



So as you mentioned at the beginning of this section, Kathy, all six aspects of holistic living are highly interconnected. And I'm going to illustrate this with a story. This comes from Dr. Rangan Chatterjee from his book called *The Stress Solution*. He's a general practitioner in the UK and he's very interested in this area and has an interesting podcast.

Also, he tells the story of a patient who had terrible Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. She had been involved in a very unpleasant, very nasty car crash 20 years earlier and really had never recovered from the emotional trauma of that. She was withdrawn. She had crippling anxiety and panic attacks. And she kept withdrawing from community based treatments such as medications. They were trying to help cure her anxiety with the assistance of counsel as she just couldn't tolerate it. She was also overweight and unfit and had a poor diet, which really was part of her coping mechanisms. She was buying processed foods high in fat and sugars, comfort foods.

So he decided to approach her issues from a very different direction. And he convinced her to improve her diet and to cook fresh food daily, so moving away from the processed foods she was buying. She was pretty reluctant. But she did do that, she had good family support, which helped her a lot. And she undertook this change in diet with amazing results. After six weeks, her mood had stabilized. And her anxiety attacks had reduced by 70%. And then she was able to undertake the psychotherapy she needed and she went on to do very well.

So she'd been caught in a spiral of her body seeking comfort foods, and in turn, this caused stress on her body, which amplified her negative mental state. And so the downward spiral continued. Dr. Chatterjee helped her break through that spiral by



changing her diet. Now, what was happening there? It really defies understanding how a change in what she ate improved her mood so directly.

25:01

Robyn: We're learning more and more that there's a three way interaction between food, the bugs that live in the gut, or the microbiome, and the human immune system. Simplifying, they talk to each other. And the information that is the result of that interaction gets sent to the brain.

Every person ideally has a population of 39 trillion gut organisms. And these various bugs, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites, and the genetic material, which interact with the body, the food we eat, and each other in complex ways we're still clarifying.

These interactions determine many aspects of health and well-being. There's a two way communication between the gut and the brain via various pathways, but especially the vagus nerve. If we treat those microorganisms well, they can lighten our mood. If we treat them poorly, they can make us anxious and depressed. Similarly, an anxious or depressed brain communicates back to the gut and generates gut symptoms. And we probably all have experience of feeling stress and having an upset gut as a consequence.

So by maximizing gut health with good food choices from our hopefully healthy environment, we help overall physical, mental and spiritual health. And in this woman's case, her family and community resources were also involved in her journey to health. So really, this emphasizes just how interconnected the six tenets are. It also emphasizes that we should never underestimate how we can alter our health with our choices.



26:49

Kathy: And that's a great story to illustrate the interconnectivity and also a great backdrop as we get into the more practical side now of some strategies that we can share with the audience on how to enhance their wellness. So let's move into that - let's take mind, body, spirit first. You can speak a little bit about those elements in more detail and then I'll give some strategies.

27:13

Robyn: Great, okay, then. So let's think about our bodies. We need to nourish ourselves to have a healthy body and I mean 'nourish' in the widest sense of the word. Ideally, we should undertake exercise or daily movement of some type, we should have good nutrition with a wide variety of mainly plant based food. We should be avoiding toxins like tobacco, drugs, or excessive alcohol.

We should be getting adequate rest, and especially sleep, both in terms of sleep quality and time. And there's a lot of research going on in this area, which is all very interesting. We should also get sufficient hydration for many reasons. But for example, we need to have moisture to ensure that the membranes that line by the nose, the gut, even the bladder can perform the very important immune tasks of forming a first line barrier to infection.

If we think about our minds, we need to be engaging our intellects. By continuing to challenge and stimulate ourselves mentally, we need to keep learning and developing our capacities for critical thinking. And we need to continue personal growth.



Emotion can sometimes be seen as a separate tenant, but we've decided to put that in this category. And with emotion, we need to be aware of our feelings, we need to accept those. And we need to be able to express our feelings. We also need to understand the feelings of others and empathy. Joy should ideally be part of our lives. And we need to remain creative and playful.

If we think about our spiritual lives, we need to remain curious and continue to search for meaning and higher purpose in our lives and undertake whatever we need to do to fulfill that purpose. And that might be parenthood, might be volunteering, it might be mentoring, any number of things. Some will meet their spiritual needs or spiritual practices with praying and conventional religion, meditation and Eastern philosophies or maybe time in nature, which is very important to me. And I know that being near the sea and being able to enjoy it, it's really important to me and my family. I have heard surfing described as going to church. And I have to say that scuba diving is an absolute bliss state for me.

29:51

Kathy: Well, I've tried surfing and I think you have to do it for a while and be good at it before it's like going to church.

So I'd like to give some examples based on your description of mind, body, spirit. But before I do, I wanted to say a word about self-compassion. As anybody who's read *The Athena Principles* knows, it's the first of five Principles in that book. And it's a practice that has taken me the longest to learn, but it's most impactful. And it really comes into play here as we're thinking about how to enhance our self-care.



Just think about, if you're looking to add something or you're looking to do something, what is right for you? What is supportive for you? This should be less about what you *should* do or what you think you should do, and more about something that feels *nurturing*. So as you hear me going through these examples, think about some things that might feel most nurturing to you.

So if you have the capacity and you can add some activities, you can learn how to move your body in a different way –so focus on movement or give attention to diet. Maybe try energy healing or adding sleep quantity, so adding hours to your evening rest.

Maybe add a new creative expression, whether it's writing or photography or art of some sort. There's lots of online clubs and groups to join now and certainly a lot of online learning. It's something I've been enjoying this past year, as we no longer need to be in proximity or at a school to be able to take advantage of some of these classes that are offered now.

From a spirit standpoint, you may choose to volunteer or connect with nature, go to church, find that church out there somewhere. And also finding ways to deepen relationships with others.

If you're in the opposite space where you feel you have no time and there's an overwhelming feeling of stress, there are some things you can stop doing. When I was in corporate, one of the things that was very helpful for me was this idea of intermittent fasting, meaning moving my main meal from the end of the day to midday, and then tailing off my calories and stopping eating whole foods, probably around five or six o'clock in the evening. And that allowed a few things, one not to go to bed with a full



stomach, but also it helped my sleep quality because my body was able to repair and regenerate versus digest. So something you can do without having to put a lot of time and energy into.

From a mind standpoint, you may choose to limit external stimuli. There's a lot coming at us, but what you actually let in, that threshold, is something that you do control. So whether it's technology, your phone, social media, or media in general, certainly there are boundaries that can be helpful if you tighten those up a bit. Also, taking periodic pauses. I know during my busiest days at work a few years back, having my watch vibrate if I hadn't gotten up to move in the last hour or so. Whether I chose to breathe or take a walk, or just get up and stretch, as Robyn mentioned before, that was quite helpful.

And then lastly, from a spirit perspective, deepening the relationship with self. So if you really feeling that time crunch, to be able to find some of that inner space, it certainly can support you as you're working through the stress and overwhelm.

So now let's move on to the next three tenants, these overlapping spheres of family, community and environment.

33:48

Robyn: Sure, thanks, Kathy. So if we're thinking about family, we all seek a sense of belonging, of being loved and engaging with others intimately. This might be with our biological families, with our elders, our parents, our siblings, our children, our partners. It might be with neighbors who are close to us. Sometimes we have a close work family. It could be a household of people sharing a house, who function as family for each other,



just like close friends can. And I think we should always remember our pets, who for many of us are very central in our families.

And so we need to maintain those family connections and relationships. And my example of this is my family Zooms, which have become a weekly fixture now. And that's talking with my siblings in Australia and New Zealand - I talk to them far more now than I ever have in my life. That's been a very positive thing.

And then if we think about community, we also need to feel a sense of inclusion and connection in meaningful ways on a less intimate level. So with acquaintances, neighbors and other community members. I recently heard the comment that we underestimate the positive effect of seeing people we know when we're out in our community, even if we don't say hello to them. And many of us have lived quite mobile lives. So I can confirm that it's quite disconcerting to live in a place where no one looks familiar, although that changes pretty rapidly for most of us.

So we need to know what's happening in our community, and many get joy from contributing to that. Community, of course, used to be location dependent but geography is no longer an issue. It's much more important to have virtual connectivity, especially in these times.

If we think about the environment level, it's very important and we can consider the importance at two levels. There's our immediate surrounds, being sure that we live in a safe, healthy home that promotes well-being. Perhaps that means living somewhere that's close to our nature fix, or close to workplaces or education, avoiding long difficult commutes, and preferably in neighborhoods that can meet our needs as a family or individuals in terms of recreation, safety, and resources. And we have to acknowledge



here that this aspect is very much affected by means and resources and people don't always have that luxury of choosing where they live.

Then there's a second larger picture of how humans interact with the environment of how they're connected to the planet, to other organisms and each other. There is an urgent need to foster positive interrelationships between planetary health and human actions, and choices to create a sustainable world. So for example, many feel that there is a need for worldwide COVID vaccination to keep everyone safe from the dangerous variant outbreaks, or immediate global initiatives to address the impact of human interventions on planetary health.

Kathy, what can you suggest for us to address these areas?

37:22

Kathy: So if you've got the capacity to add some activities from a family perspective, and I think we're seeing some of this, there's the idea of family nights or game nights. There have been pandemic pets and there have been pandemic gardens. So getting the family together around a common activity. We've also been seeing this trend toward documenting family history with photos or video or some research on sites like Ancestry. And getting outdoors, especially now that the weather, in half of the world anyway, is getting warmer, to be able to go out. And you mentioned play before, you know getting outside and playing a little bit.

From a community standpoint, and boy there's a need for sure for things like, coaching and mentoring. Supporting local businesses is a way to get involved. Volunteering at a local library or a hospital or a school. And you mentioned caregiving before - giving a caregiver a break, maybe helping a neighbor in need.



And then from an environmental standpoint, being able to walk or bike instead of driving a car, recycling, gardening, and just getting involved with community planning and environmental activities, anything that has to do with water or air or soil.

And then on the flip side. If you feel like you're not having the space or the capacity, I think the strategy here is really about simplifying. So is there some way that you can simplify a family schedule? Can you find the friction points and try to take those out or address them, working with your family on a master calendar or batching tasks? Maybe it's having tech free time together in the small periods of time that you do have, to make sure that they are quality times.

My suggestion from a community and environmental perspective is not to bring something else into your life but rather combine, if you can, a family activity with a community or an environmental concern. So for example, a school activity that's based in the community that you can do with your kids, or using natural products in the home so your usual routines are good for the environment - reusable bottles, recycled bags, keeping an eye on conservation or renewable energy activities would be some examples.

So we've discussed a whole laundry list of things that you can do to boost your well-being. And I had suggested that you kind of filter through them with the idea that you pick the one that feels nurturing to you and decide on a small step that you might be able to take.

And I'll do a little teaser. In our next episode, which is Episode 22, it's a Wellness Wednesday episode, and Robyn and I are going to be introducing a little invitation.



There will be a PDF that you can download with the list of these suggestions and a blank action plan. So just know that there will be a tool available during the next episode that you can utilize to implement these suggestions.

40:51

Robyn: It sounds great, Kathy.

40:53

Kathy: Well, we covered a lot of territory. Is there anything else before we get to The Dose of Inspiration segment? Is there anything else that you'd like to share with the audience?

41:05

Robyn: I think it's a wonderful, great smorgasbord of choices.

41:11

Kathy: We're all about choice.

41:14

Robyn: Well, and just to say that there are so many choices, a lot of right things to do or not to do, and not to be overwhelmed by them, that none of us has them all sorted. I'm still very much on my very own, very flawed journey for health. So don't be disheartened if you feel you've got a long way to go. And just remember, every right step adds to your well-being.

41:38



Kathy: Well said. Alright, we'll wrap up today with our Dose of Inspiration. And, you know, I love to ask these questions, because I think people are interested in what you're interested in. So with that in mind, what is your favorite wellness practice or a recent wellness when?

42:00

Robyn: Well, at the moment, my favorite practice is exercising in the natural world. I've joined, since COVID, I've joined a group resistance class, we have a great instructor, Kara. And it's a really fun group of women. We're outside in a park under large, shady trees. And there's birds tweeting overhead and the clouds are scattering overhead also. And so I think it really is addressing my spiritual needs for nature, I'm socializing, having fun, and getting fit.

42:33

Kathy: Mmm, I love that. And for those who are listening, I had to listen to this all winter, about Robyn being outside with the birds tweeting, and yes, I was living vicariously through her. So what's been a struggle? Or where are you focusing your wellness efforts now?

42:52

Robyn: You know, I'm not very good at slowing down. I need to create time to think, perhaps to meditate. I've always struggled with it. At least to journal and even just stop. That's been my challenge.

43:06

Kathy: Excellent. Okay. What have you been reading lately or what have you been listening to that you've enjoyed?



43:14

Robyn: A lot, but I'm very lucky to be able to do that. I read a couple of books by Dr. Edith Eva Eger. They're called *The Choice* and *The Gift*. And those are a harrowing story she tells, illustrating how she was a concentration camp survivor. But how even in those situations, we all have choices about how we look at our struggles.

43:42

Kathy: All right and I'll put a link to that in the show notes. What new thing or experience are you looking forward to trying?

43:50

Robyn: Well, I guess I'm putting this out there now so I'm going to have to do it. I know I've always enjoyed writing and also synthesizing scientific material to make it more accessible for non-scientists. So I'm looking forward to adding some blogs to my website about that material.

44:09

Kathy: All right, and I'm just the gal to keep you accountable.

Robyn: Yes. Great.

Kathy: Now envision the perfect road trip? Where do you go, what do you do?

44:23

Robyn: Well, my perfect road trip is probably actually a boat trip, off the road to the sea, sailing with my husband to nearby islands, maybe a couple of days. Sail away, so lots of



time of reflection whilst we're on watch overnight, taking turns steering the boat, watching the stars. You never know what you're going to see in the marine environment. Snorkeling and cooking and living simply with only the resources that we can take with us, simplifying things.

44:54

Kathy: Love it, love it. You are the first Athena Wellness Podcast sail trip. So, congratulations! And once again, living vicariously through you. That sounds absolutely lovely. What has you feeling inspired these days? What's lighting you up?

45:11

Robyn: Self empowerment. Just recognizing where I hold myself back and how many options and choices are actually out there and how I can only embrace those.

45:22

Kathy: I love that. And lastly, what has you optimistic about the future?

45:27

Robyn: Well, sadly for older people, it's actually young people who make me optimistic about the future. They seem to be recognizing and embracing the need for change. And recognizing now's the time to take action to change our lives and save our planet. So many of them seem prepared to live differently and make sacrifices to do this. Unlike some older people, unfortunately, who seem to avoid new ways.

45:57

Kathy: Yeah, hats off to the younger generation, we need some new voices. So that's wonderful.



Well, Robyn, I want to thank you so much for being with us today and for sharing your insights. What's the best way for people to get in touch with you?

46:14

Robyn: Sure, Kathy, you can just come to my website at www.DrRobynHealthCoach.com.

And just note that when you spell Robyn, it's with a y, which I'm told is the Antipodean spelling of the female.

46:32

Kathy: Well, I'll put a link in the show notes to the website and also to the wellness models that we refer to should the listeners want to download them. Thank you so much again for joining us, Robyn. I really appreciate it.

46:46

Robyn: Thank you, Kathy. I really appreciate the opportunity to be on your podcast.

46:54

I hope this episode gave you some new insights and sparked an idea or two. Robyn and I will be inviting you to a Gentle Spring Reset in Episode 22. We're going to make some wellness enhancements in our lives as the new season arrives. And we hope you'll join us, taking manageable but meaningful steps towards enhancing our well-being together. Stay tuned!



Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who can benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

If you'd like to access the show notes, have a question you'd like addressed on a future episode, or would like a transcript of this episode, visit www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast.

Until next time, be well!