



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 035 – Living a Creative Life with Laurie Wagner
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00:05

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 Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

Hello and welcome to Episode 35. One of my intentions with this podcast is to create a gathering space where listeners feel in community, less alone as they explore their deepest creative stirrings. Our guest today, Laurie Wagner, helps her students do just that through a process she calls Wild Writing.

Laurie has been publishing books and essays and teaching writing for the last 25 years. She has a gift for holding space in a way that supports her students as they dive deep into their inner worlds. Along with her Wild Writing classes, Laurie also hosts The Wild Family, a group of writers from all over the world who she works with weekly.

As you'll soon hear, Laurie has a unique view of storytelling and how to mine those stories to access your inner truth. We cover a range of topics, including:

- What it means to live a creative life
- How to invite and work with creative ideas
- Our reflection on the year 2020, including the lesson of letting go, and
- How to take the soulfulness of these times as we reemerge into the world.



I came away from this conversation feeling inspired, that the depth of emotion and experience of the past year will be transformed and will inform what we create and how we choose to re-engage with the world.

We end this episode with our Dose of Inspiration segment where Laurie shares some of the things that are lighting her up these days. And as always, I'll put links to those items and to Laurie's contact information in the show notes.

And now onto the show. I hope you enjoy the conversation.

02:30 Kathy

So Laurie, welcome to The Athena Wellness Podcast. Thanks so much for being here.

02:35 Laurie

So happy to see you.

02:39 Kathy

So please share a bit about who you are and what you do.

02:44 Laurie

Well, I live in Northern California, and for the last 30 years, you know, really 35 years, I've been involved in writing and journalism. I started as a young pup in Berkeley writing for the weekly papers. I've always been a creative person.



When you look back, it's just this huge landscape of things you've done. And it's funny, I remember hearing someone say, when you're looking ahead and making choices, it looks like there are a million paths. But when you look back, it's just been one path.

And so, you know, I've done so many different things. In my past, I've worked on documentary films, I've written books, I've been in bands, I've, you know, set up salons, I've done so many things. What I have been doing in the last 20 years, I've been teaching a kind of writing practice called Wild Writing, which is automatic writing.

I didn't make up automatic writing, it's really you, you're writing as fast as you can, pen never leaving the page. It's very intuitive. It's very healing. When we write so quickly, we're trying to get past the critical mind and get past the part of us that wants to look good, because we've all been raised to want to assemble ourselves and get it together and be successful. And the thing about all that is that that's all good for certain things.

But the Wild Writing is really a way to connect to our, you know, our unconscious, the deep dreamer. And we write from that place, so it's a lot of really messy writing. And I do that live, as well. Anyway, pre-pandemic, I did it live. Now most of my classes are on Zoom.

And I also host a big community of hundreds of people from around the world who get my videos weekly, and who are in this deeply healing, 15 minute a day, three times a week practice of writing, you know, really honest writing, trying to get to the authentic, part of what we care about on the page.

Kathy



That's beautiful, and it's that very mosaic type of life, which is exactly why I wanted to have this conversation. It was really instrumental for me as I was transitioning from a linear corporate life to a more creative one to be able to see that these are all options and we get to choose what we want to do.

05:03 Kathy

And so, with that as a backdrop, I wanted to start the conversation with a macro view of: "What does living a creative life mean to you?" So you've given a lot of examples, but let's dive deeper into that. What is creativity? How does it add to your life?

05:20 Laurie

Well, you know, I think it's a practice every day because I can certainly get tight and small minded, as I worry about what am I supposed to do next? And I have this accountability.

But what is it to create? What is the creative? What is that? You know, when you said that, what I thought was, I imagined the wind passing through this house, I imagined the kind of way in which I can walk through the world in a much more porous, receptive way. And so I'm paying attention to what is around me.

A creative life, it can be jump started and sort of woken up with the senses. I'm thinking of the way we sort of dance through things and the words porous and open are with me. And so it's not so much the what of what we do, I think that makes the creative life, but the how of how we walk it, which is to leave room for openness and attention.

You know, one of the wonderful things a friend and I take groups of women to San Miguel de Allende to write and to eat and to walk those gorgeous streets. It's a beautiful



town in Mexico, it's an artists colony. But one of the things we do is, one of my favorites is we walk through the streets at the Golden Hour, right before it starts getting dark, with our little iPhone cameras, just being receptive, to what we're listening to, what we see, do we smell something? Sometimes we just follow our noses. And so maybe the creative life is a kind of following your nose, it's being receptive, it's saying "Yes," it's taking a right down the path, even though, you know, if you go straight, you'll get there faster. But the right will take you someplace else. It's welcoming a way to get a little lost from the rigid way that we attempt to move through our days. Does that make sense?

07:18 Kathy

Yeah, it definitely does make sense. And I wonder, does that receptivity, did it start with the writing that made you more aware or do you think walking through the world that way informs the writing?

07:31 Laurie

Oh, wow, that's a great question. I'm definitely walking through the world that way, it informs the writing. And the good news about that is that for people who've never considered themselves writers, or creative people, the practice is to start to pay attention to the littlest things, especially the littlest things, the things, you know, that seem so unimportant. They couldn't possibly be worthy of writing, they couldn't possibly be worthy of a painting or to take a picture of it. Those things...

So it's listening to the whisper of "Look!" or "What was that?" I have a practice where I make sure that every time I see something interesting to me, I take a picture of it. And so that means that even if it's, it's nothing, I make sure to take a picture of it. Just because I had a trigger, I had a thought in my mind that said, "Take that picture." It's not so much the picture that will come back to me that will be important. It's that I'm listening to what



I hear and I'm being receptive. And I'm not overriding it with "That's stupid," or "That's nothing," or "That's not important."

And in the work we do, what we're really doing is building a muscle by writing as fast as we can, to build a muscle so that we're listening and we're receptive, because that can take us to new places. It's the critical mind, the mind that already knows that it's listening to the voice of the father or the grandfather or the sensibility that I think is such a killer for us, you know.

But you asked that question. I think it goes both ways with me because I think that I've always been a sensitive person, I think when I forget that and I get tense or I get tight or I get small. That's when I forget the world is this vast opportunity.

You know, it's funny, I was writing some copy for my newsletter for the last few days and it's been so tight for me, it's felt so tight, like there's a right way to do it. And there's a, you know, if I do it a certain way, it'll be successful. If I don't, and then I had this feeling like it was so unhappy for me, the process of writing this. And I thought today, it doesn't really matter. It doesn't really matter. What matters is that I do my best, I populate the page. I make it as good as I can and I send it off and I move on. You know, I think that when we feel too precious, and I certainly know what this feels like, too precious about this - things we create, we sort of kill them.

10:02 Kathy

What I love about the way you describe it is that it's really mindfulness, it's presence. You're in a deep state of presence when you're noticing all of these things and then bringing them into your life. So I just love that. It's just, it's like a, it's like a very active form of meditation that's informing your work. Yeah, I just love that.



10:22 Laurie

Because I think that, I think that when we want something, or when we're asked for something, we can get very narrow, because we think that this is the path, but there's all this other stuff out there. But it's a practice, you know. I get as tense or as small minded as anyone else. But it's, for me it's like, okay, open the front door, light some incense, turn on a candle, listen to some music. Like those are the ways I sort of tricked myself to just, okay, just, there's a world out there, you know?

10:54 Kathy

But that conditioning can really stifle people, right, if you don't know what that is? And feeling my earliest creative stirrings on my commute to my Wall Street job when I was in my 20s and 30s, it was unnerving at first, you know, when you don't have an expressive outlet and you don't know what to do with it. And then when you do find something, like writing or music, it can be really frustrating having to hold that tension between discovering this whole new inner world and living a very different outer reality. How do you balance those two?

So I wanted to talk about those stirrings a little bit. So you get new creative ideas and when they make themselves known to you, like you said, you're taking all of these pictures, there's all of this incoming. How do you kind of sort through that and begin to work with them?

11:45 Laurie

Hmm. That's a good question. So probably different ways at different times.



But the first thing that came to me is I have accountability. I have things that I promised to do. And I have accountability, whether it's, I meet with my friends on Tuesday nights to write, or accountability because I promised a blog post I put out there, or accountability because I have a class coming up. And so I know that those moments of accountability, where I'm going to show up, are gonna, they're really asking me to come with a kind of creative goodie bag full of me paying attention to myself.

So for instance, if I know I've got a blog post coming up, probably I'm out there in the world, whether I'm walking or driving or doing what I'm doing. And I'm trying to be receptive. And I'm asking myself as I'm having encounters, especially the ones that whisper to me, like, "What's this?" "Is this something?" Or if I have strong feelings about something, I'll explore it.

And so because I live and work in a world that is populated by my own inspiration, creativity, instinct, I need to be out there in the world sort of searching for it. It's kind of like if I invite you for dinner Friday night, I've got to get food before you come. And so the accountability, I think it's just a wonderful thing.

I'm sort of part practical and part creative. And the practical is the accountability. Even for the people who work with me, sometimes they only write once a week, but they do it with me, because they're busy. And they wouldn't do it otherwise.

But I like your question a lot because I certainly have lots of writing I've done that has really just been for the process, for the process of writing. And I value that as well. And not everything I do has to become something. Sometimes there's a season for a lot of getting things out in print or getting things in front of people. And then there's also just great goodness in, in being in the creative.



14:02 Kathy

Have you ever gotten one of those stirrings that were so big you personally had to change in some way to be able to meet that?

14:09 Laurie

Yeah, yeah, I, you know, I have. Yes. I mean, I've had a couple of them.

One was I had, as I said, you know, in my 20s, in my 20s and late 20s, I lived a very creative life. And I was working in the bookstore and I was in a band and I was making art on the weekends and I was writing for the local papers. And at some point, probably when I hit about 30 I thought none of this is going to be marketable. I'm not good at any of these things. I'm not good enough at them. Yes, I love them. Yes, they've been my life. But I better get my ass on the tracks and start to make something.

I wanted a family, I wanted a career. And so I let all that go and I got my first and only corporate job at Simon and Schuster. And I was a sales rep for the big publishing company in New York. I was good at it. And I really enjoyed it. And I learned a lot.

But it wasn't me. Like I shouldn't have been out there selling other people's stuff. Because meanwhile, what I've done is I've taken all my creativity and just put it out to pasture, just going, thanks, but no thanks, you're not going to get me where I want to go. And so I was doing all this, working for Simon and this corporation, you know, and as much fun as I had and as much as I learned, it was also starting to kill me.

I think I was about 31 years old at that point. I was on a trip with my husband and we were out in Moab, Utah on one of those huge peaks where you can see 100 miles. And I



was staring out there. And, this is a weird thing to say, but I saw the cancer choo choo train coming my way. And what I felt was this very strong feeling like, "If you don't make a change, you're going to get sick, do you want to have to get sick first in order to make the change? Are you willing to make the change?"

And it was really scary because what I felt was all my creativity, you know, it was kind of like coming back and just saying, like, "How unfair, how unfair of you to judge all that work because you didn't think it was going to make the market," you know? And it had been so soul killing for me. And so I heard it and I knew that I had to do it.

When I came home, I quit. And a month later I got my first book job, you know, my first published book was being wanted from the publisher. That was huge. That was huge.

You know, I remember going to my father and telling him what I wanted to do. And him saying, "That's stupid. You've got a company car, you have a credit card, you know what to do. Books are interesting." And I wasn't happy, you know.

And mostly, I think the thing was, the reason the cancer choo choo train was coming for me is because I hadn't been listening to the part of me that was the creative. That was really, you know, much more alive and in the world.

I'm sure I brought that kind of energy to my work at Simon and Schuster. But it wasn't me. I remember someone turning to me one day and saying, "Why are you selling books?" And what had happened was, I'll tell you, interestingly, Simon publishes a lot of books, a lot of great books. But there was also a lot of crap being published. And as I was reading it, and selling, and I was thinking, this is crap. And I sacrificed my own



creativity because I didn't think like, "Who are you to say? Who are you to say?" And any way, that began, you know, years and years of book publishing.

17:40 Kathy

Mm hmm. You know, there's something about being in the deep wilderness and getting those, having those breakthroughs. So I'm curious, did you know that something was off when you took that trip? Or did it really come as a surprise, like you had to be out in the open to be able to hear that, "Whoa, you know, what, something's not right here. I need to make a change."

18:00 Laurie

I think I needed to be out in the open, because I probably heard it in a lot of little ways, but I was busy. I had a deadline to meet, I had numbers to meet, you know? And I thought it could just tuck it, you know, we do that - we sort of tuck those feelings away, like we'll get to it later, you know?

But then, here we are. And I think nature is really so, so holy in its silence, in its grandeur, you can't help but get in touch with something that's more true. Then the next tricky step is to listen and to be willing to not know what the next step is.

And I'll say, and I know we're talking about creativity and work and living that kind of life, but I'll tell you another stirring I had years later when I felt I needed to leave my marriage. That also came from left field. I'd felt it, but I'd never intended it. And then it was right there. And it practically fell out of my mouth. And that was scary. I think all the big, big transitions are scary because we are entering a world we don't have answers for. All we know is we need to make a change.



19:17 Kathy

And speaking of moving into a world that we don't recognize, this conversation is taking place in the Spring of 2021. And while our experiences this past year have all been personal and unique, we collectively have been sharing a period of radical transformation on many levels. And some of us haven't been able to get out into the wilderness, but it's almost like we brought the wilderness in, along with the quiet.

So I think it's a wonderful segway to talk about just some of the things that we learned from this past year and maybe something for you that was surprising, you know, once everything kind of became very insular.

19:59 Laurie

Right. I mean, I think the poet Billy Collins said something about the pandemic in the beginning. He said, "Finally, the world has slowed down the pace of poetry." And poetry is such a quiet, small little activity, and the world had slowed down to that.

The other thing that was really apparent to me, it was actually good for writing. Not because there was so much time, but because we finally were separated from all our distractions and all the ways in which we were always anticipating the next great thing. And we, just that mind of ours, you know, "I'm hungry, I want to, can't wait, we'll make a plan for this..." And it takes you out of the present.

One of the things about the Wild Writing that I do that, you know, is, we learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable, because creativity isn't always this flashy and fun, in fact, it very rarely is like that. It sometimes is, in moments, and then it's just, the work of it. It's just sitting down to work with it. It's a combination of things.



And so finally, here we are, terribly uncomfortable, terribly without distraction. Finally, sitting down. And what I noticed in the writing I was doing with all my students was, at first it looked like depression, there was so much loss. And there was a lot of anxiety around what's happening. Of course, you remember, I mean, and we're still in kind of that kind of place, like we didn't have answers. And we had to rely on ourselves to make decisions about things - could we get on a plane, was it safe to go to the market, is this the right mask? It was like nobody knew anything.

And what I found, after some time with people, is after the sort of months of the crisis that they were holding, there was a kind of flatness that came and a kind of way that people stopped performing creatively, performing on the page, performing in their language, in their relationships. And things settled down to a kind of sobriety that I thought was very good for writing and very good for the creative. It was not dazzling. It was honest. And it was authentic. And I thought that was a really powerful thing, you know?

And, of course, the work that I did at that time, you know, something really marvelous happened to me that I didn't see coming, which was my business model. Prior to all of this, it was, I run these classes, I run eight classes a week on Zoom, or live, and then I take these lovely trips with people out into the world. But I never knew how to scale my work up. And I didn't even think about scaling my work up. A lot of people would think that way, but I was pretty content with what I was doing.

But when the pandemic struck, my first thought was, we're going to need to chronicle this time, because we are about to step into something we've never ever done before. And so people are going to need a way to chronicle it. And so I very quickly created a 27 day video program that I put out into the world for free. And so many people grabbed it.



And from it, it was free, I had no intentions, there was no ambition in it, it was really just a way to help people, it came from that place, there was not a dollar attached to it in my little brain. But about midway through when people were doing these 27 days, I thought, “Hmm, I have nothing for them. My classes are small, you know, they can't come, I have no room. What can I give these people in case they like this work and they want to continue?”

And so I started a membership. And now there are like 400 people from all around the world who I'm making videos for every week and who get together every couple weeks. Interesting. The stirring was people need something. And I had to do it so quickly that I couldn't do it perfectly, couldn't get it right. Like, I just was, even as they were signing up, I was still making it. And I have to say, you know, that is a good thing. Sometimes it's not good to have so much time. Sometimes you get an idea, you get a spark, it's like, “Jump, jump and turn it loose out into the world,” you know?

And I think it's been, you know, wonderful for a lot of people and it's also been really wonderful for me. Now I'm, it's grown me, it's grown me not just with the numbers, but the way I show up in the world. And I'm glad I said that to you because you know, I've been struggling over that marketing material and I just need to unleash it. You know, I'm always constantly in the practice of learning what I'm teaching, you know?

24:43 Kathy

Absolutely. You know, it's funny, these last few topics that we've covered, I never really made the connection because I've had those moments too when you're running, running, running and you finally put yourself in a place where you can hear what you



really need. And this past year has been a lot of that. We've been inside, you know, I've never really made that connection.

But you mentioned something that's really interesting - this need to let go, almost like a shedding. And, you know, it feels to me like we've experienced this series of collective, just momentous and relentless events, you know, these multi-layered shocks that hit our physical, our mental, emotional, political, social, right?

How do we begin to make sense of these times? In particular, it gets back to letting go, the grief of letting go who we were? And some of that could be ourselves, who we were in the old world. It could be the loss of loved ones that we've all experienced and not been able to grieve. Our community milestones. How do we channel that into some creative channel?

26:00 Laurie

That's a good question. You've got lots of good questions - the kinds of questions that have me on my tiptoes.

How do we do that? But you know, I don't even know if we have to be conscious. Like, I really think we are holding this grief, we're holding the shootings, we're holding beatings, we're holding the fires, we're holding the politics, we're holding the entire thing. And I think it's in our skin.

I think it's very much, for some people, it's skin level. For others, it's much deeper. And I don't even know if we have to go after it intentionally. I just think we need to keep the creativity river flowing, because it's going to flow through it.



So even if I'm writing, even if I'm reading something that seems not to have any grief in it, if it's big enough, the grief wants to come through it, you know? So I don't have to, like, I found it very difficult to go after finding meaning in this this year, to actually find language for it in a succinct way.

It's bigger than language, you know, it's in my pores. So I'll just go after the smallest thing I can knowing that the grief is in there, too. The grief is in there and it will come out if I can ask a question that is big enough for lots of different things to rush through.

I guess what I'm saying, Kathy, is that if we stay open and stay loose, you might be like, let's say you're someone who wants to move and dance, what might, what might start as a sort of joyous dance around your living room, you might get in touch with something super sad and that dance may move into sadness. And you may have had to start with that happy, exhilarating to get in touch with it. And so I think to keep ourselves in a kind of fluid way enables all the different feelings to come through.

28:07 Kathy

It gets back to the wind that you started with, right, and how you're navigating it.

28:11 Laurie

I think everything is connected to everything. Now, you know, I was thinking back when I was thinking about this interview. Years ago when I would be in my studio working, I would have my guitar over here and I would have my paints over here and then my typewriter over here. And I sort of moved from one to the other because each one informed the next thing. And so if I felt like I got stopped with the word, I'd pick up the guitar and even though they weren't connected, there was still, it was me just like moving it, moving it.



And I really think that everything is connected. So when we talk about getting outside and sitting under the trees or going for a walk we talked about, even just going to the garden center and looking at all the plants and just starting to use our pictures, like, what are we drawn to? What are we attracted to? It feeds everything.

You know, it's like my friend, Jeff Greenwald, said a hundred years ago, he said, "I'm writing even when I'm not writing." So we're feeding this part of us that is trying to pay attention, trying to be present, trying to stop when we hear something, just, "Oh, what was that?" Or, you know, to open ourselves to look up on the street and make contact. All of these things are really, I think, a part of feeding the human nature that wants to express itself through lots of things.

29:36 Kathy

Beautiful. And you know, for all of the heartache and the disruption and heavy doses of reality that we've been sorting through, there have been beautiful moments of grace and connection, right? And it's my belly sense that when we get enough distance, and I think this is going to take some time to kind of work through, we're going to think of this time as one of depth and learning and growth.

And so how do we keep this? It feels very soulful to me. How do we keep the sense of soulfulness as we re-emerge into the world, because whether it's next month or three months or six months from now, we're going to have to step back into some sort of activity. So some thoughts on that?

30:22 Laurie



Yeah, I mean, I'm thinking about it like you're thinking about it, like everybody's wondering as the world starts to shift a little bit. I've come to really love my quiet. I've come to really love that. And I noticed that when I'm in a group of people and I open my mouth, I sort of step out of my body sometimes. It's that social thing that has me, but it's just joining the crowd. And it's not that it's not delightful and joyous and connecting. But I know for myself that the quiet has become very important to me.

And it's the way, even going under the radar a little bit. And just making time for that is a way and paying attention to those times as well.

I think a writing practice, like even a morning page practice in the morning, is really great, because morning writing real early is a way to capture the intuitive unconscious, because you're not assembled yet. And so I think what's, even if that's all people did, to have a 15 minute three page writing practice, and that's just my practice, it helps them land in a sort of deeper, unconscious, more soulful place at the start of the day. And that then at least they get that down. And even if it seems like they're just transitioning to something else, they've actually started something inside of themselves, they started stirring the pot.

And that pot stays with you all throughout the day, whether you're conscious of it or not. And if it's a piece of writing, say, or a piece of art or something, and then you come back to it, you've actually been working on it, even if you haven't been consciously working on it. It's been working you.

And that also changes the nature of how we relate to people and the choices around who we spend time with. We're looking at that, you know, what are the relationships that are life giving? Where have we been showing up in our lives?



And I'll speak to myself, Where have I been showing up in my life in a way that isn't quite honest? I've always been a helper type. And so sometimes I have this illusion that I'm helpful to people. And it's also what I saw during the pandemic is that my capacity for a lot of things just dropped. And helping others, at least in a way that I thought I was being a good person, just dropped and it didn't give, it didn't allow for that agency. Those people had to help themselves. And so what I'm really speaking to is conserving my energy so that I can use it for rest or even for my own projects that I'm sort of terrified to get into. Because the blank page is the blank page.

33:17 Kathy

Yeah, absolutely. Wonderful. So I want to continue with that sense of life giving as we emerge... We wrap up these sessions with something that we call A Dose of Inspiration, which is just a quick Q&A of what's keeping you inspired. So let's start with the first question, which is, "What's a favorite wellness practice or a recent wellness win?"

33:42 Laurie

For me, the first is always going to be music. Music speaks to the soul. So I listen to Spotify and it delivers to me a lot of interesting music. I think that's been, that's probably the thing that touches me deeply. Because it's not an intellectual activity to listen to music. It speaks to the deeper part of me, the sort of deeper river inside. So music has always been that.

But I'll tell you, like my very favorite thing to do during the pandemic, which I wasn't doing to this extent, is I just take these grand walks. I take these grand walks by myself and I love listening to podcasts. And my very favorite, soul stirring person right now is Tara Brach, a meditation teacher. And I feel like I have found a teacher in that woman.



She really is able to talk about the sort of the good, the bad and the ugly of our humanity and who we are as people you know, our small thoughts, our funny little short circuited ways. She talks about that and she lets the human part out and then she moves with it. She reminds me that my humaneness is welcome here.

35:08 Kathy

And to be self-compassionate with yourself.

35:11 Laurie

She's so wonderful and that compassion - it's been such a hard year. And I think a lot of people, including myself, have had many times in the last year where I felt like I should be doing this better. Or I should... "Why am I so sad? Why am I so sad? We're turning the corner, shouldn't we all be happy?"

But we're, you know, we talked about that trauma, that grief that's in us. And so, you know, how do we create practices that allow for all the feelings, the joy of Spring, maybe a new relationship or a new friend, the trauma, the losses, you know, that we felt all year? How do we create practices that allow all that stuff?

You know, sometimes when I'm writing with people, and they stumble into something that makes them cry, they'll start apologizing, like, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." It's like, "Welcome. Welcome the sadness, you know, you've just blessed our writing circle. Thank you for reminding us that we have more to give here."

And so, you know, I want practices that helped me to touch into lots of different parts of myself. I think music is beautiful. I think movement is beautiful. Art making is beautiful. Writing is beautiful. Singing is beautiful. Cooking is beautiful. I mean, expression of all



kinds. digging in the garden. It's the movement, it's the allowing in that helps us get out of our heads and into our sensitivity and our creativity.

36:49 Kathy

Beautiful, perfect, that's great. What have you read or listened to lately, besides Tara Brach, that you've enjoyed?

37:00

She's really been a main one. I have to say, I listen to a lot of politics and a lot of news. And what I've liked about that is it doesn't appear necessarily to be under the Creative, but it's helped me to make sense, there's been so much going on in the world all year. And it's a lot to hold. And so when I hear somebody that I respect talking about it and mulching it, I love that.

But I will say that I've become - do you know, Sam Harris, the meditation teacher? He has an incredible app called Waking Up. And he does a 10 minute meditation every day. It's, it's wonderful.

And there's even a thing he does that I really like a lot, which is, you'll get it on your phone. And it's like twice a day, you'll get this little blip. And it says, "Have a moment to listen?" And in one minute you tap "Yes" and then you're taken to this thing on your phone. And in one minute, it's only one minute long, he has you think about something, just wherever you are, right? Then and there, "Stop. Do you have a moment?" And then he says the most incredible things that have you shift. And they almost always do have me shift in the moment and just pivot where my attention was. Most often I'm thinking about something or maybe I'm stressed or maybe I've got my head in something and he -blip- "Do you have a moment?" Oh, and then and there, you listen.



I love something that takes one minute. So that's, you know, a lot of times people think that the creative or to do, what is this going to take? It's going to be a big shift. I need the biggest things, I need all this time. I think it's just a pivot. It's just a practice of pivoting, of just opening, of just saying okay, yes now, and being willing.

It's like in the Wild Writing, you know, what we say we say, "Please write as poorly as possible." And so we want to let go of, you know, what is that Dante's Inferno? "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." We really have to abandon wanting to do something well in order to do it. And so I want to remember that in everything I do, I want to let go of what's going to happen and just pay attention to the happening. You know, if I could click my heels three times, I just want that.

39:24 Kathy

Perfect. Yeah. What new thing or experience are you looking forward to trying?

39:32 Laurie

Huh...I heard you could make bread in a Dutch oven without kneading it... I like that. It seems so easy. I'm also signed up for some tennis lessons.

I was walking with a friend and we were walking along the Bay and she was pointing out these windsurfers and she said, "I'm going to do that next week." And I said, "Wow, why?" She goes, "It just looks so much fun." And when she said it, she was saying like, "I just want more joy in my life. I just want more joy."

And when I think about getting on the tennis court and moving my arm through the air, I feel joyous. You know, I also started to play pickleball. It's joyous. It's joyous, because it's



so damn goofy. It's fun. And so I want more of that. I want more of that. Sure, I'd love to get through the pile of books by my bed. But honestly, I want to release myself from my big brain. Release myself from - I'm a very ambitious person. I want more fun, put myself in situations where my physical body is all I can rely on. You know. I love that.

40:43 Kathy

I love it. So, envision your perfect road trip, where do you go, what do you do?

40:49 Laurie

Oh, well, I do love Joshua Tree National Park. It's a desert in Southern California. It's sublime. It's amazing. This year, I made it a commitment to myself to wake up on the desert floor every year. This year, I couldn't do it because they close the park a lot. But I have a plan to go out there by myself in the Fall and camp for three days. And just be in the quiet of the desert. And to drive out there and to you know, do my whole thing by myself.

I just think the desert is really magical. You know, when you wake up in the desert, my daughter, who I've gone with a few times, will get me up for the sunrise. And it's black. You go sit up on a big rock and she'll bring coffee along. It's in the dark. And then you watch the desert go from like black to sort of a little pink, little inky blue. And you just watch as the stars recede and the colors of the desert. It's cold at first and you can feel the warmth coming up. I mean, that's really really, really beautiful.

41:57 Kathy

Art in motion.

Laurie



Yeah.

Kathy

I can't wait to hear what stirrings come out of that trip in the Fall. You'll have to come back on and tell us what went on.

42:10 Laurie

You could do a podcast where everyone who's taking a trip comes back and tells you about their roadtrip.

42:13 Kathy

it's you know, it's possible... What has you feeling inspired these days, what's lighting you up?

42:21 Laurie

Leaving my doors and windows, open the weather. Making sure I get outside, walking. Really just the air, just getting out into the air. Even if it's not deep nature, it's just being outside and moving my body. I think there's been a lot of that in this podcast. It's clearly something that's been important to me because of so much isolation and sheltering and staying in.

There's some beautiful shows on Netflix. I think it's called *Shtisel*. And it takes place in Israel. And it's about these Hasidic Jews, but it is transporting. And it's you don't even have to know any, you don't have to understand or relate to them. It's humanity at its core. It's all in their faces. It's this beautiful show. I think it's S-H-T-I-S-E-L. And it's just, it's heartbreakingly beautiful.



I really loved the movie *Nomadland*. Again, it is so perfect for this year because hardly anything happens. And it takes place in the desert. And everything that happens in that movie happens on Francis McDormand's face. And so you're really paying attention. And you're moving through this huge emotional shift in this woman's face, it's breathtakingly beautiful. You know, those things have really, I'm touched by those things.

43:55 Kathy

Excellent. And the last one. What has you optimistic about the future?

44:02 Laurie

You know, my kids are happy. My kids are happy. I know not all kids are happy. I know. It's really been a tough year for a lot of families. My kids are 23 and 25. But they're engaged in the world. They work. They have friends. They do things. They go on picnics, they go into the forest, and they know what's happening. They've got their masks on. But they are alive and active in the world. And that's, that's all of us sort of writing into the future.

44:38 Kathy

Mm hmm, yeah. This has been such a beautiful conversation. Laurie, can you tell people the best way to get in touch with you and to learn more about your Wild Family, your Wild Writing Family?

44:49 Laurie

Wild Writing Family? Yeah. It has been really nice to talk to talk to you, Kathy, thank you so much. You ask really wonderful questions. I'll be thinking about them. See, this has



been a creative opportunity for me, too. And as I move through the rest of my day, I'll be thinking about this conversation and continuing to think about these questions.

People can find me at my website, it's 27powers.org. I'm in Northern California, but these days, that doesn't seem to matter. 27powers.org - that's two, seven. And I host something called the Wild Family, which is a video series of very short videos, and a very small practice, a small practice three days a week. And so that's what I do.

But of course, we're all going to want to travel. So, you know, we go to San Miguel de Allende in Mexico. And of course, there's still an opportunity to come to Nepal with us in 2022 if Nepal is ready for us. So love to travel, love to get out there. And we take people on these creative adventures into really wild and wooly places to let those places spark our own creativity and our imagination.

46:05 Kathy

Thank you so much, Laurie, for sharing your heart. I really appreciate it.

46:08

Oh, I'm so happy. Thank you.

46:14

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 could 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.

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Until next time, be well!