



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 158 – Vancast: Small Steps, Big Strides
October 25, 2022

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[00:00:05] Kathy Robinson: 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.

[00:00:30] Kathy: Today's episode is brought to you by The Athena Wellness Academy, your resource for wholehearted living.

The Academy's featured offering is an online course called, *From 'Type A' to 'Type Be,' How to Mindfully Descend the Corporate Ladder and Invite What's Next*. This course is perfect for you if you're contemplating or navigating a professional transition, and it's available as a self study or with a small cohort of students facilitated by me, Kathy Robinson.

To learn more, I invite you to go to [AthenaWellnessAcademy.teachable.com](https://www.athenawellness.com) or click on the link in the show notes.



[00:01:21] Kathy: Hello and welcome. Thanks so much for joining me for this shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

Today's show is a Walking The Talk Vancast, a look behind the scenes into what I'm learning and working through along with a takeaway for you. These episodes are informal and casual, recorded on the go from wherever I happen to be at the time. And today, that's sitting in my van in the woods close to home on a rainy but fairly warm day, surrounded by gorgeous autumn colors.

[00:02:01] I hit a fitness milestone at CrossFit a few weeks back. Part of the workout that day included five sets of seven burpee to pull-up movements. That means hitting the floor with your hands in an all out sprawl, chest to ground, and then using the momentum of the push-up to jump back to your feet into a squat position. From there you spring up, grab an overhead bar and perform a jumping pull-up before dropping back down and repeating the exercise for the required number of reps.

So why am I sharing this? Because before I turned 58-years-old, I couldn't even dream of pulling myself up once, nevermind 35 times in a workout as I did that day. So what changed? Consistent small steps.

In January of this year, I set an intention to move from my beginner status at CrossFit to intermediate for my age group. I set goals for the squat, bench press, deadlift and power clean lifts, along with wanting to build the strength for unassisted pull-ups.



As winter turned to spring, I achieved and surpassed most of the weightlifting goals. But the pull-up remained elusive - and frustrating. I was still relying on a resistance band that I would loop over the bar and slip my foot into to assist with the movement. And while I continued to do that in the gym, I came up with an ancillary plan.

[00:03:45] Sometime in June, I placed a pull-up bar in my home in a doorway that I pass multiple times a day. It's at a height where I could wrap my hands around the bar if I stood on my toes, but I couldn't pull myself up from that extended position. But if I jumped up and grabbed the bar with my arms at a 45 degree angle, I could pull myself up and edge my chin over the bar.

On July 1st, I set a goal: Five sets of one jumping pull-up and five full push-ups that I spread throughout the day. I tracked my progress on a one page monthly calendar that I printed from the internet. And by the end of the month, I had done more than 750 push-ups and 150 jumping pull-ups, one at a time, over 31 days.

On August 1st, the goal became: Five sets of two jumping pull-ups and five push-ups. I kept increasing the jumping pull-ups by one each month. And as I finish up October, the volume increased from 150 pull-ups in July to 600 in October.

If I had set a goal to complete that many pull-ups back in June, I would have felt overwhelmed. But my mantra, whenever I passed the bar during the day, was, "Just one."



What turned it into a habit, though, was the calendar tracking. When I started in July and completed a set, I marked a “1” for the pull-up, and a “5” for the push-ups. I repeated that three more times. And then on the fifth set, I put a line through the “1s” and then a line through the “5s.” That gave me a sense of completion and satisfaction for the day.

And the longer the streak, the more committed I was to keep it going. At the end of the month, I totaled up all the reps, which got me motivated for the next month.

[00:05:55] So my takeaway for you is to bring an elusive goal of yours to mind. Think about the end result that you’d like to achieve. And then think about what’s possible for you to do today.

Once you have your goal and end result in mind, here are five questions to help focus you on creating a path of continual progress and momentum:

1. **Why is this important to you?** My pull-up goal was not only tied to my overall desire to stay healthy as I age, but I want to build muscle as I get older without risking injury. After all, the ultimate goal is to just feel good.
2. **What modest, manageable action can you take today?** The point is to build consistent action, something you can commit to for the next 30 days. Let’s say you want to play the guitar. Depending on your current level of ability, you could choose to learn a song, a chord progression or a scale. And you can apply the same approach to establishing any wellness, business or creative habit.



3. **How will you track your progress?** I like my monthly printed calendar because I can keep them near the pull-up bar and not only track what I need to do for the day, but use it as a visual reminder of the journey throughout the months.
4. **What can you learn and explore?** Part of the beauty of this approach is the knowledge and experience you gain by taking consistent action builds trust with your inner knowing. You will find, over time, you'll rely less on external guidance and more on your own.
5. **How can you continue to up your game?** At the end of your first 30 days, how can you modify to keep challenging yourself? If you miss some days, what can you do to learn from the experience and set yourself up for success next month?

[00:08:07] Small steps establish habits that give you confidence when you hit your micro-goals and they provide motivation for enduring success. Your goals become doable and your progress additive as you see and feel yourself moving toward the goal you want to achieve.

The day I walked into the gym and the burpee pull-ups were part of the workout, I had no idea if I could do them. But my months of preparation gave me the confidence to try. To my delight, not only could I do them, but I actually enjoyed the movement, a full body exercise. And I left the gym that day with a big smile on my face, revved up on endorphins and ready to continue my routine the next day.



Over time, you will prove to yourself that over the long term, small steps add up to big strides and long term gains. In the words of legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, "Little things make big things happen."

[00:09:17] Kathy: 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.

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!

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[00:10:20] [END OF AUDIO]