



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 183 – Self-care is Not Selfish with Damian White
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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 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 I'm joined, once again, by writer, Damian White. During this discussion, Damian shares his thoughts to help listeners who may be experiencing a difficult time or transition, offering four actionable strategies to boost mental health

And now onto the show. I hope you find this conversation helpful.

[00:01:57] Kathy: Once again, I'm joined by poet Damian White. Welcome back, Damian.

[00:02:01] Damian White: Thank you.

[00:02:03] Kathy: Damian, I would love to help the listener who may be having some difficulty in life, maybe they're going through a hard transition, much like some of the transitions that you may have gone through.

Can you help them, maybe share some of your experiences, or maybe some strategies that you employed that helped you get through and get to the next thing that life had to offer. What would you say to those listeners?



[00:02:30] Damian: I would say that self-care is not selfish. That would be my catchphrase for how I've been going through life coming out of just a very tumultuous time period.

For me, it's understanding that it's important that I work on myself, it's important that I create boundaries. I think that my advice for others would be to feel okay creating boundaries for yourself. For me, that's emotionally, that's mentally.

So I have no problem telling someone, "Hey, I'm going to step out because it's very chaotic here, and that's bothering me," or, "Hey, I'm doing this thing, and I don't want to have this type of environment around, so I need to protect my space."

And I say that because I'm the only one who knows what it looks like when I get to rock bottom. So I have to be my own accountability partner, my own accountability buddy. No one saw that when I was out there in San Francisco, no one saw the complete brokenness. They got a patched-up version when I came back. But I'm the only one that knows what that looks like and I have to make sure that I never allow myself to get back to that point. And so, I have to prioritize me, and I have to also accept that that's not selfish.

That's important because it's going to allow me to bring a whole version of Damian White to wherever I'm going. So I'm going to make sure that when I come to places or when I show up, I'm able to speak from a place of contentment, from a place of happiness, from a place of satisfaction, not need or longing or ulterior



motives. I'm able to speak from a place of a center, I'm centered, I'm quiet, I'm calm, I'm collected, I'm not chaotic.

And I think there's a few layers to that. If we could talk about them, I would say, first of all, you have to be able to notice those things. You have to be able to notice that like, "Hey, there's a whirlwind going on around me." And just because you're not the one making the whirlwind spin doesn't mean that it's not spinning around you. You could still get hit by residual debris in a tornado outside, even if it's not coming through your house.

So for me, it's like, how do you get away from the storm? And I'm constantly doing that at all times. I think that it's priority number one. I even told my wife, I told her this exact thing. "I love you. I care about you. It's important that you know that. There may be times when I have to withdraw myself a little bit. Go spend some time with myself or just decompressing, however the best way is at the time. It may not be us talking about it right now, because I'm triggered, or because I had this moment a few seconds ago that reminded me of when I was going through this other bad time. And I want to make sure that what happened next then doesn't happen next now. So I'm going to withdraw." And I think that there's a recognizing of the situation and then also the taking action, being okay with the action.



Some of us feel like... It's super easy. These are very common feelings. Just like you don't want someone to know something's going on with you, so you don't want to tell them that you need some time, because now you're opening the can of worms. You want to withdraw. And now they have questions, "Talk about it, what's going on? Why don't you want to help?" You get all those things.

You have to always remember that you're the guardian of this galaxy, in a sense. You have to be in control of who can come in and out of your emotions, who can affect your feelings, who can change my mood for the day.

I tell my stepson all the time, I say, "Your mom could ruin my day, every day. I could ruin her day, every day. She could also make my day every day. And I could make her day every day." Because that's how emotions work a lot of times. People get access to them. And when you know how to push the buttons or manipulate the landscape a little bit, you have a throughline to affecting someone else.

And so I think that I need to be the quality control on who has that access to me. So that would be my advice. Be your own advocate. Be your own quality control. Be your own emotional assistant. Just, I don't know, prioritize yourself, I guess is the best way I could say it.

[00:06:43] Kathy: You said a number of things here that I think are really crucial. The first is the importance of self-awareness, of just knowing that this thing is happening. The second thing is being able to name it, what is it that's going on



inside? The third is to connect to that still point, to try to get out of the storm and to avoid any collateral damage that might be coming your way. And then the fourth thing is this idea of right action of being able to advocate, what is it that I need in this moment that's a big self-compassion step, and it goes back to your self-care point of where all of this started. So I think it's amazing advice.

I'm curious for you in 2015, looking back at your younger self now, how might you have been able to help that person? And we go through all experiences because we have to go through them, so it's not about changing the past. But if you had to address that younger man, and say, "Hey, when you're feeling this way," how might you be able to help that younger version of you work with some of these concepts?

[00:07:56] Damian: I would have told younger version of me to do it sooner, to fail sooner. Because, back to what you just said, I told my mom this too, what happened had to happen. There was no way that I could have become who I had in my mind without those things happening. I needed to touch grass, as the kids say these days. I needed to have life experience. I needed to feel what that felt like.

I think that I would have said, "Hey, you knew you didn't want to be a professor earlier than two years into grad school. You knew that. You knew you had all these artistic passions and you knew that you just didn't know what to do after college, and you saw the path, that you knew that if you apply to these programs, you'd



have seven more years to figure life out, and you thought that that was the safety net."

So I chose the safety net. And I would have told myself to choose failing. If failure was going to bring me closer to the ultimate success I'm looking for, then I would have said, "Do that, do that sooner."

[00:08:58] Kathy: Wow, that is beautifully powerful.

Thank you so much, Damian, for your time today, for your honesty, for your beautiful book. I will put links in the show notes and I really encourage our readers to just pick up a copy of this gorgeous book. It's heartening. It will touch you in places that you didn't know existed and it's just beautiful.

Thank you so much for coming on and for sharing that today. I really appreciate it.

[00:09:26] Damian: And I appreciate you reading the book. I've been thinking this - I'm very grateful for every word read. I'm just I'm happy that people are seeing it. And the fact that some of the lines even touched you to the point where you brought them out into this interview. I think that lets me know I'm doing the right thing. I'm in the right place. And so I appreciate it, and I want to just let you know that.

[00:09:46] Kathy: Thank you so much. I can't wait for the next one and I hope you'll come back on whenever that might be. You always have a place here.



Thank you so much for your time, Damian. Appreciate it.

[00:09:55] Damian: Thank you.

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[00:09:57] 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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[00:11:01] [END OF AUDIO]