

We CU Stories Unbound Episode 10 Peace in Every Breath: A CU Father and Daughter Community Project

Transcripts

De'Vonte Parson ([00:00:12](#)):

Welcome to the We CU Unbound Stories, the College Unbound Podcast, where we dive deep into the transformative work of our community, transforming self communities, justice and education. We're here to break down barriers and build up new possibilities. This is a platform for learning, a platform for healing, a platform for belonging and connection. So tune in and join us on this journey of empowerment.

Safiro Velez ([00:00:53](#)):

Hello everyone, and welcome back. My name is Safiro Velez. In this episode of We CU Stories Unbound, my father, Eliezer Velez. And I share our journey of stepping away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, reconnecting with nature's slower, more intentional rhythm. We reflect on an honest conversation about stress and burnout. One that doesn't push us apart, but instead brought us closer together. Out of that moment, our CU Project Breathe Was Born, a podcast and community space created to invite, pause, rest, and movement with gratitude. Whether you're a student, a creative, or simply feeling the weight of the world, we invite you into our family and into this conversation about slowing down and finding your breath.

Amanda Esons ([00:01:59](#)):

So welcome. It is such an honor to have this time with both of you and to learn about this important project that you're creating together. We'll also have a bit of a Taste of the Breath Podcast to get a sense of what to expect with an invitation to all our listeners on this podcast to actually tune into their podcast. Before we dive into the conversation, would you mind briefly both introducing yourselves?

Safiro Velez ([00:02:23](#)):

Yes. Um, hello, my name is Safiro Maria de Velez . I am a published illustrator of, uh, 15 plus years, and I've been, uh, attending CU for four years. Uh, I should be graduating very, very soon, uh, and I'm very excited about that. I've been on my journey, uh, just as I go, uh, quietly encouraging my family to continue to pursue their education. Um, and in light of that, uh, I have found myself collaborating with my father, uh, to do this podcast.

Amanda Esons ([00:03:08](#)):

Thanks, Safiro And Eliezer, would you mind introducing yourself as well?

Eliezer Velez ([00:03:12](#)):

Thank you. Yes. Uh, Eliezer Velez and I also, I am a student at CU where I found myself when a, an interesting set of circumstances happened while I was working and having, um, and going to school as well. What happened was something that stressed me out to the point where I realized how much

pain I go through Safiro was witness to the fact that continually daily, all the time, no seizing. I would be always stressed, always working late night hours, morning hours, uh, early morning hours, just stress because of work or something else that was going on. And eventually she made the point to me that I, I was addicted to stress, which made me stop and thinking. So I am causing myself all of this pain that I am continually acting as if, you know, it's just you carry the weight of the world, you don't really realize that you're doing it. So when she's, we had a conversation that developed into this podcast that we've been, uh, collaborating, uh, in, and I'm just very excited that people are motivated, uh, to become friends with us and to do this together.

Amanda Esons ([00:04:43](#)):

Beautiful. Thank you. And I'll just briefly introduce myself. Amanda Esons, I'm institutional storyteller at college. Unbound, and I'll be kind of guiding our conversation today, stepping in as host for this episode. Um, but thank you again for being here and for this time. And so let's dive in. You, I think I wanna pick up where you just were leading us Eliezer, because it's, it's so beautiful that you're both, um, in school together at this time and are there in the ways to support each other and also to develop a project together in this way. So it sounded like Safiro, you were attuned to something going on with your father, and is this where this idea to come together to develop this podcast together emerge? Is that the beginning? Do you wanna lead us through how it came to be that you're developing this core project together?

Amanda Esons ([00:05:37](#)):

And just to give our listeners just a little bit of context, um, and maybe you wanna help me with this too, So the core project is really at the heart of the College Unbound curriculum. So students are developing during their entire time as CU students. These really in-depth projects that oftentimes are in service to their communities, to themselves. Um, they're really powerful elements for creating change. And then the instructional courses and the lab course really are a web of support to help students in developing these. And I don't know if you wanna add any more of, of what the cu core project is, Safiro or a Eliezer and then let's jump into how that really began to develop between the two of you.

Safiro Velez ([00:06:22](#)):

Um, well, uh, when I first, since I was the, uh, the first to hop on board, um, uh, in, into cu, um, I kind of wanted to, uh, share that one of the reasons why I chose to dedicate myself, uh, to college, which I've always wanted to do, just there, there there were a lot of colleges that weren't, uh, uh, very suitable to my needs, and they weren't very accommodating. Um, uh, at the time I was actually struggling with, uh, suicidal ideation. Um, this was something that, uh, like depression, I've struggled with most of my life. Um, so to kind of get to that point where, uh, I needed something to look forward to, uh, CU just kind of happened to fall right on my lap. And there was someone who was actually working with me, uh, for, uh, like a year, and she was encouraging me to, um, to attend.

Safiro Velez ([00:07:35](#)):

Uh, so I, I dedicated myself to CU and my project just didn't feel like it was projecting very well at first. I felt very much all over the place. I didn't see my own strengths. Um, and I could see, you know, how my weaknesses could be strengths, uh, and just by, you know, the help of the courses and, and, you know, rewiring my perspective a little bit. Um, but it was, it got to the point where, uh, years later, um, I'm having a conversation with my dad, as he said. Um, and I'm just kind of like, just not in any kind of,

you know, uh, like an accusatory way, but I'm like, it sounds like you are addicted to this stress. Like you don't really wanna let it go because it's serving you somehow. Um, and that happens to people, and that's just something that I have a, a strength of my own is, is I, I'm highly observant, uh, which with my family, I feel I could be as observant and, and free in my, um, observation as I can.

Safiro Velez ([00:08:50](#)):

Um, so we have that openness with each other. Um, so I just wanted to like gently point that out. And it's like, it's not, uh, it's, it's more common, I think, especially now when we have hustle culture pushing us to do X, Y, z, you know, get into the grind, make that money. Um, but I've never felt really connected with those ideologies because it, it, it didn't make sense according to nature, because nature had a slower flow to it. And that's how I felt I was growing up. So to be pushed to rush into things just never felt right to me. And so, observing my dad being rushed all the time, it, it made me fairly upset and, and, um, kind of hopeless, uh, in a sense, because there was, it felt like there was nothing I could do to assist him, uh, in coming out of that space where he felt like he needed to be in this hustle culture. Um, so I'm gonna let dad carry it away because, uh, I didn't notice this was, uh, going to be and take off as much as it did. And I think his perspective is gonna really kind of like fill in the rest of the story.

Eliezer Velez ([00:10:13](#)):

Well, thank you, Safiro That is, um, it's good to hear. I never felt, uh, that you were lashing me. Just, you were telling me this is what it is. And so, uh, there is no reason for any family to have any issues. It's your opinion. I received it as a truth. So moving forward, now, I want to add that, uh, yes, I am. I've been in the hustle culture. Uh, I was, I was speaking to somebody that up until recently, just recently, about a year ago, uh, I stopped stressing about paying the rent. Like every time the rent was coming, I always trying to figure out who will buy part of my kidney, because I can't sell the whole thing. I only have a quarter left, I'm just joking. So I would be looking how, and I would be getting into these assignments that are professional assignments, because I have a background in nonprofit management as well as, you know, paralegal that decades long.

Eliezer Velez ([00:11:21](#)):

So I would get into a lot of work. And then I'm, I need to make sure that I keep my word because A, I'm getting paid, and b, these are my, my own personal clients besides my regular job as a grant writer for a nonprofit in, um, the Northeast. And so a lot of stuff that I need to be continually at the computer, uh, um, is pretty much, has been my life. Now, after that, that last, no, two years ago, in 24, I, uh, because of what I had been processing emotionally over the previous year and a half, I was treated for emotional shock at the emergency room because that's how much stress I was holding onto. And so, uh, I recall they gave me medication, but it, I didn't like, uh, it, it was, it was a controlled substance, uh, Xanax, uh, and like I did not like the way it made me feel.

Eliezer Velez ([00:12:26](#)):

So, um, I sort of like did not want to keep trying that, and was just living my life, being stressed without noticing until the day that Afe had mentioned something to me, because I had a problem, uh, with a grant that I had written the base, the main portion of the grant, I submitted a grant without the main portion, which it contains several partners outside of our organization. We look so poorly, and I'm having my one-on-one with my professor, uh, at CU when I get this email saying, uh, that the application is, um, not compliant. And so instead of going crazy and having a heart attack, which

normally would've happened, um, because I would've had to explain this, this to a lot of people. And I'm, I'm thinking, why am I doing this job? This is so crazy. Um, having my, my lab professor and I, having a one-on-one at that moment allowed me to stop and, uh, take a breath and then ask her to forgive me for a moment, as I indicated. Thank you. We will respond as soon as possible. Sent that out. And I just told her what had happened. Um, and interestingly, I was calmer, uh, before the end of that interaction. My boss indicated we all worked on this together. None of us saw it. So I felt like that was God's grace, God's grace.

Eliezer Velez ([00:14:09](#)):

And, uh, that's when I had the conversation with Safiro. And then I, my core project was to set up some AI manageable, uh, app that would help nonprofits manage their 501(c)(3)s. 'cause that's my background. I figured let's do something that answers all the questions by state and federal requirements. So that's, that's what I, my core project was gonna be. But when this thing happened, I realized I can help a lot of people set up their nonprofits, but I need help myself. So if I work going this direction and completely shift everything that I'm working on, uh, from what I am really good at, 'cause I've been doing this. My daughter had to tell me, I am stressed. I am addicted to stress. What do I know about anything? There's nine weeks left before the week, the year's out.

Eliezer Velez ([00:15:05](#)):

Let us just meet early in the morning and six o'clock in the morning. Uh, my time is seven o'clock in the morning eastern. So it was tough every morning doing it. But we got up, we came in, we, we simplified the process because the idea was we're not gonna get stressed so that we can help people not be stressed. So I'll just leave it there, uh, because this, obviously, it's nine weeks worth of stuff that we've learned, shared information from people who, you know, were telling us how the, the, the process that we put together, the, the system is very simple. Um, with people telling us how much that has helped 'em, and it wasn't so bad, uh, I felt like with Safiro, I was surprised. People are interested. They're coming in, they're telling us, well, I just went through this stress situation. And, and so we are not advocating religion.

Eliezer Velez ([00:16:04](#)):

Uh, but I have friends who are Muslim, and I have friends who are Christian, and I have friends who are atheists. And the idea is, I will use whatever scripture we have, um, because there's a lot of wealth. There's a wealth of information in the world, but we are not using it. And Safiro was the pause for me. She was, she became the pause for me to say, stop, look at yourself. And we spoke for one hour just speaking about this subject, and it didn't die because there was just so much to it. We reviewed things that happened in our lives and, you know, know, uh, all that, that, that had been going on. Uh, and so I guess the one thing that I appreciated the most of it was, it was a beta planned situation where we are going to do this thing. It doesn't have to come out perfect.

Eliezer Velez ([00:16:57](#)):

And I just, uh, add a little bit. And the first episode that we did, we are 15 minutes late because I'm really good at hosting num, um, uh, online with Zoom. I do it all the time. But that day, things didn't work out as planned. And my professor, she was the only one there, and I didn't feel like, oh, I gotta hurry up. And I was like, Hey, I'm sorry we're having technical difficulties. We'll be with you in a moment. You know? And I kind of like said, okay, you know, let's, let's not show them that, like, oh, the world's collapsing so that we can relax. You know, <laugh>, you had a test right at the beginning.

Right at the beginning. And I appreciated that Safiro also took, uh, it happened because Safiro said, I am willing to do like alternate, uh, Mondays. So it wasn't every Monday I have to leave. No, this is Frito's turn. So anyway, so it became what it became. We have of course, more details as to what happens in them, but just to, you know, uh, end this portion of the question.

Amanda Esons ([00:17:58](#)):

First of all, I just wanna share that I admire so much the relationship that the two of you have in the fact that you could see your father. So in these ways, you know that it's such a depth of, it comes with love, but to see where, where he might be suffering and, and to be able to share that with him in a way that could lead to you creating changes in your lives to support, to support him in that way, and to support others through this podcast. So, I wonder, when you were thinking about designing, um, what it would feel like, what you would do during this time together, so it's an hour that you gather, did you think of what would, what do I need to, to help myself as a mirror to kind of reflect what you think others would benefit from? Or did you gather from other people what they need? Like how did it, how did you begin the design process?

Safiro Velez ([00:18:55](#)):

That's a really interesting question, because the, I felt like the, uh, the design process that came out of Breath was very organic because it was my dad and I, uh, coming together to learn together. And with that learning and realizing like, we're really not slowing down, and we're certainly not gonna force ourselves to continue to rush the way the world enforces that. Um, so, uh, my dad had an idea of what he wanted, um, specifically how, uh, like it's, it is a podcast, but we have visual slides for people who do need that and who, who hop on Zoom. Um, but he'll have like a, he, he would describe what he had wanted, and there was a specific image that he would have liked to use as like, centerpiece for Breath, um, as, as the title. And so I just kind of like took that image.

Safiro Velez ([00:20:00](#)):

And, um, and very simply, again, this was like huge. It, like, I, I appreciated his word, uh, and his direction and, and really focusing and honing on, you know, this is a beta test because I'm a perfectionist at heart. I like things to look nice, <laugh>. Um, but remembering that this is beta was, was actually very helpful for me because like, he, he, like, he's bringing in pieces that are like, actually, I can use this concept in other areas of my work life and daily life, and I can treat things as beta, uh, for the moment, and then build on it as it goes, because I, like, I, I understood that as a concept, but it was very difficult to act out. And in designing what we needed to use cool colors, um, the image that he had wanted was a bit dull. So there were, there were just minor changes to brighten up the colors, make it look more cyan, like a bright blue, um, like really calm colors that are also, you know, just energetic.

Safiro Velez ([00:21:10](#)):

So like, it's, there's, there's a, a calmness to, to breathe. There's an environment of, um, relaxation, but uh, also a little bit of, um, anticipation for, you know, sharing, sharing the stories of what works with each other. And that's what I really appreciated about Breathe. Um, I didn't necessarily want to be the only one bringing in things to teach at people. Um, I didn't want, I don't like necessarily telling people what to do, especially if someone might feel that it doesn't work for them. Um, I have no right to tell people what works for them if I don't know them that well. So, uh, I really appreciated how organically

we would just kind of like slowly test things like, well, what do you, this is the story that we have to share today. Um, here's what I have learned and what we have learned as individuals in this process.

Safiro Velez ([00:22:13](#)):

What, what story do you have that might be similar to this? Or what work for you that looks a little bit different? Um, and bringing in that community where people could speak up about what works for them. And it's like, Hey, I really enjoyed that you mentioned this. It reminds me of another situation that happened that, you know, I felt is, is related. Um, even if it looks completely different from what we were talking about, there's always like a string of connection that kind of helps people, like make that click happen for themselves. Like, aha, I get it now. Um, which is really satisfying for me to see. Um, and I think that including that energy and the design as simple as it is, and we really wanted to, or I specifically, uh, wanted to, um, have something that could be, um, reused and recycled, so that way we're not focusing so much on changing the design every time, um, especially with the slides, but to kind of like use a very simple, uh, four wheel system.

Safiro Velez ([00:23:27](#)):

So like four slices of a pie, uh, four different categories of what to expect with breath. And having that be like the fundamental basis of very simply coming together, having a, like a, a, a story, time sharing our reflection, opening the, the door to, uh, others to share for the others to share their experience and stories, which is just as valid and important. And then ending with a meditation or a lesson that a guest might have. We've had, um, Rochelle Dobson, um, who is specialized. She's a, certified trainer, physical trainer, and she did a little like, uh, morning exercise routine with us to kind of like stretch us, uh, and, and kind of like keep us energized for the, for the morning ahead. So there's like different ways to think about how we are actively either holding our breath, which is common nowadays, or, you know, taking that time to say, okay, where am I? Where is the tension in my body? What can I do that's very small in this moment to allow myself to breathe again?

Amanda Esons ([00:24:42](#)):

Thank you for that. Um, I'd love in a little while to get into the, those moments where you found that it clicked for people too. I'd love to talk a little bit about that as well, but, Eliezer what would you add to this in terms of bringing your vision to life? How did you go about doing that and working with Ro?

Eliezer Velez ([00:25:03](#)):

Uh, above all, working with her, having, like I said, if, if Ro hadn't said, you know, I am willing to take every other Sat every other Monday and do it. If she hadn't given me that, it probably wouldn't have, it wouldn't be what it is now. Um, for me, in the design, I wanted it to be personable. I wanted for people to feel unguarded, which is, you know, very difficult to do when you just show up into a place. I invited someone who came in, he didn't show his face, um, but he did, uh, mention that he was having difficulties, uh, financial difficulties because of the situations that are happening around him and being the male in the house and his wife having to do the, the heavy lifting.

Eliezer Velez ([00:26:00](#)):

It's, it's been eating at him. And he was just able to just put that out there. And all we did was we went through the process, and I, I, I like to enter into how the process for our podcast works, but for me, uh, having people being able to come in and, and feel free to just comment or just listen, you don't have to say anything. You don't have to show your face. You can just listen to the points that

were showing. Um, that was the main thing. Uh, definitely not having some, uh, presentation that we had to continually update. I didn't want that, that I was very, uh, conscientious about the time that it would take. And I didn't wanna spend the time on that, because then it would add to stress, uh, which this is the anti-stress podcast, right? So, uh, and I just came up with that one.

Eliezer Velez ([00:26:59](#)):

We may call it that. So, uh, the, I did want the, the, the colors. Uh, and I do have, I, I could share with you, I know you want the, any audience, people can't see it, but I do have a presentation that I made, uh, my, my exhibition to show colleagues at cu what we do, just to kinda explain what it is. Um, so basically, <inaudible> was mentioning, which is something that I wanted, I wanted, I wanted the process or the setup to be something where we knew where we were, and we entered, we divided it into 15 second intervals. So the, the hour has four quarters. The first quarter we left it, uh, open for people to arrive a little bit later. Uh, perhaps have, uh, a, uh, cool sounding, uh, soft music with, in, with, uh, either under sea or over the waters or cloud-like, uh, visuals, while, uh, perhaps something is being playing in the background to help people to slow it down.

Eliezer Velez ([00:28:07](#)):

We go in, say, hello, nice to see you very quietly, thank you for being here for the first quarter. So it's our introductions or our warm gathering. Um, uh, so at the 15 minute mark, we then begin our breathe session. And basically, uh, a breathed session is a place where you get, you get your tools for pausing, breathing, resting, and then moving. We're always moving. We're always moving. We're not pausing. <laugh>, I wasn't, uh, we are not breathing, and we were not resting. One of the reasons why we include rest instead of, there's a sense, there's a statement that we say live in the moment, uh, which is, you know, what we, what few of us do, but many of us less rest in the moment. If I did not make the sunrise in the morning, I'm not gonna worry about how it's gonna end. At the end of the day, I'm gonna be like, it's gonna be there.

Eliezer Velez ([00:29:11](#)):

I'm just going to rest. I have work to do, but I am going to become aware of who I am, which I think was the, the clinching thing. I didn't realize that I was allowing myself all this pain because it was natural. I thought everybody dealt with it. It's like everybody's feeling this way, so why am I gonna complain? Nobody wants to hear a complainer. That was on my mind. But when I, when I paused, I said, and I was looking at how I was feeling, and I was thinking, you know, I could be changing all of this, but because of the, it's a, uh, it's a muscle memory. We jumped to a conclusion. We, in a split second, we, we, instead of pausing, we continue because we need to get ahead of the stress. So instead of pausing, which was to me the brilliant part, when Safiro you know, told me that it made me stop.

Eliezer Velez ([00:30:21](#)):

And then again, take a breath. What is more important in this moment than how I feel? And then I began to, to then rest and say, this, this is how I wanted to, every time that we had a session, we will always bring it in to our breath. This moment, it doesn't matter if in half an hour we have a meeting or a phone call. Right now, in this moment, I'm just loving myself. And one of the things that Safiro uh, had said to me before, which I was like, you know, that's really interesting. Uh, if you, if you hug yourself, and, you know, I think that takes a little practice, because if I do this, you know, I might feel like, you know, what am I doing? You know? But if I, if I just say to myself, you know, you are an

amazing person. People love you, and those who don't, don't change that. You are a lovable person. And just begin to speak to people and say things that I, that I would say to myself if I stepped outside to pause, to breathe to, to rest in that moment, and to bring people to the, to the place where they can say.

Eliezer Velez ([00:31:39](#)):

And once we, we also spoke about the vagus system, where sometimes when you take a really deep breath that releases something, we rarely use that. But when we are able to release vagus tensions or, uh, however, whatever's going on with your system, but whenever to release it, you always can tell that it was a good one. So the idea has been to breathe. We go to breathing exercises, we pause, we breathe, we rest in this moment, and we move forward with gratitude. And so, real quick, uh, one of my colleagues from, uh, cu came in and made a presentation because her platform is also for mental health, and it's involving, um, being grounded in gratitude. And so she came in, she brought it, I was like, that's excellent. Uh, I didn't have to worry about what to say, just enjoyed it. And everybody had something to say.

Eliezer Velez ([00:32:44](#)):

And to me, that was communal. We were becoming a community. And when that happened, I was like, ah, this is sustainable. So we then, um, like I said, we, we, we start with the gathering, pause, breathe, rest, and move. That's our breathe second quarter segment. Then we open the forum for people to share if they want to, or we can continue discussions or bring something else for the next, for the third quarter. And then the last quarter is your takeaway, where you take away, uh, things that you're grateful for. One of the things that I've mentioned before, and I say it because I think it's very impactful, I have an aunt who lost the ability to taste. So she used to cook so amazingly, and now everything, she cooks it, it, it's not nothing like that. So I'm grateful that I have the sense of taste, and I can touch and I can breathe, and I have health, and I can get up for the ceiling, for the sky, no matter what it's doing. Uh, and I think that we sort of like try to convey that and help people along with their day. And that, to me, at the very end of the day when it feels like, ah, we breathe, I breathe. I felt it. I, you know, hopefully people did as well. But that segment at the very end, when people are grateful, and they com comment afterwards,

Amanda Esons ([00:34:08](#)):

You spoke about the connections that you see, like the impact that this experience has on others. So what impacts, or any surprises that you felt yourself experiencing this, whether it be building something with your father, um, the design aspects of this, or just being present for reset on Mondays to breathe and to be in community. Anything you've noticed with yourself, and then also with the people that have come, like, if any, any learning that you've noticed, um, in the clicks where you see that change happening?

Safiro Velez ([00:34:46](#)):

Yes, absolutely. There have been a lot of changes. Uh, and, and that has been my whole life. So I have had the wonderful opportunity of learning how to navigate life when there is constant change. So that is something that, although especially when, uh, in my, in my younger, younger years, I'll say, although that was incredibly frustrating because I didn't, there was, there was no sense of, uh, uh, groundedness in the sense that this, this opportunity, or this system or this schedule is going to remain as is. Uh, I had the, the opportunity to learn how to navigate changes and just flow with

whatever is happening on a given day. Um, and how that has reflected in, uh, my, uh, my part in Breathe, uh, the podcast. Um, I have been able to really ground a lot more deeply into my own sense of stability in self, um, which has been a huge journey and a huge struggle to figure out where I was going to get that stability, um, because it clearly wasn't coming out, coming from anywhere outside of me.

Safiro Velez ([00:36:12](#)):

So to be able to really connect with myself and give myself the opportunity to like either sit in nature, uh, with a cup of tea, um, uh, sit on the porch, or, you know, even if I'm just meditating indoors, um, to take that moment of quiet. I like taking a good portion of my day, especially if I know there's going to be a, like a rush. Um, uh, like later in the week, I personally commit, um, to at least 20 minutes of meditation. Some people say longer, but that's just not always possible for some people. I say at least five minutes of meditation if I can. My goal, uh, is, is to at least do 20 minutes to really feel like I'm centered in myself, and that I'm, I'm noticing what's happening in my body because, uh, I think in, in, uh, Western medicine, uh, it's very focused on getting those quick fixes, which can be helpful, but not in a prolonged way.

Safiro Velez ([00:37:25](#)):

So to really tune into the, the weird, uh, sometimes, uh, pains, uh, or aches or, you know, just headaches that start to come up, just to notice them and be aware of them and be like, okay, I'm focusing too much in my head. There are too many thoughts going on. I need to slow down. I need to breathe and regroup, so that way I know that I'm still my safe space. So that's what I have noticed for myself. And then for others, uh, I've had so many, uh, so many listeners come up to at least, at least, um, I say so many, but I, like, I, I have three stories in mind that are, um, that are significant. Um, and I'll, I'll list two that are the most amazing. Um, one person in, in Rhode Island, uh, a listener or I, I, I might be mixing them up, but I'm, I'm gonna commit to, a peer of mine.

Safiro Velez ([00:38:35](#)):

She had experienced, um, I believe it was a situation or a car wreck or road rage, something that had affected her family, and that was starting to affect her, um, her and her family. Like she, she's been dedicated to listening to breathe, uh, every Monday. Uh, so for her to say, we've been breathing through this as a family, we've been through breathing through all of this, and that's been really helping us. And it's been keeping us grounded and focused on, you know, our peace and maintaining our sense of stability. Even though everyone is, uh, everyone else might like circumstances, situations pop up, there can be chaos, there can be confusion, but for them to keep their peace was very significant for me. And that was specifically, not, not on a Monday, but several days in into the week, and she's like, I'm learning these things and I'm applying them in my life.

Safiro Velez ([00:39:46](#)):

Uh, that was very significant for me. Hear, I was like, okay, I, like, we changed a whole family's life in that moment. That was incredible. Another, uh, woman who, uh, is my dear friend, she had a situation come up that same day. Uh, I can't recall what exactly what it was that had the come up for her, but it was a stressful situation for her. And she said, I breathe through this stressful moment in my life, and I'm just, I'm keep, I'll keep going. And I'm, I'm just moving on in my day and I'm remembering to breathe. And that's still just as significant because when we hold on to those moments that, that replay in our minds, it happens to me all the time to remember to be like, okay, that was a situation

that happened past, or this was a, a very uncomfortable moment that just happened that seemed like it was about to be a conflict, or, or it was about to be negative, uh, uh, like the negative effect would attach to my day.

Safiro Velez ([00:41:00](#)):

And to choose to breathe and say, I have this opportunity to just let it go and just choose myself and my peace for my family, for my friends, for my coworkers that are getting ready to like, and that spreads, and that, that, that, that's a ripple effect into the world, because you chose to keep your peace. So that, to me is, is, uh, it's, it's, uh, I think before I would, I would, uh, not see how effective this was in people's lives, but because it's happening to people I care about, and because the people that I care about are saying this is, this is what helped in my stressful moment in, in a moment where, uh, I thought I was gonna carry this all day and I chose not to because I remembered I could breathe and I could let it go. That is significant, that is impactful for me.

Amanda Esons ([00:41:58](#)):

Such a ripple effect. I'm so glad you brought that in too, because yeah, it's like people are practicing their, their muscle memory so that it becomes easier to remember that they can turn to their breath in those moments. And then the ripple effect. Yeah, like of seeing, like if a child sees that their parent now is breathing through something, then they too become more aware of, of mechanisms and use and stressful moments. So it's creating huge impacts. Thank you so much for sharing that.

Eliezer Velez ([00:42:29](#)):

For me, what has happened has been that just having the discussion on how I am feeling internally has helped me to then say, Hey, that's a good thing. I just learned. Let's talk about it. So that's how all of the topics developed. Uh, or sto was speaking about something that I had no idea was going on, and was really interesting. That became, you know, her when that became her topic during the day that she was hosting. So I have learned in my past experience, uh, teaching just about anything. Uh, if you are learning with your students, then they're really learning with you because you are sharing new information. So every time that I would say I had a problem, I did not even know that I immediately went into the fight or flight mode, and that I lived there continuously. I woke up in the morning, the chest, uh, stress, the, I didn't want to look at my email. So I began to talk about that, you know, let me pause. It's okay. The email's not gonna go anywhere, and when I look at it, it'll be fine. But I had to willingly stop myself from attacking the day, you know, regardless of all the pain that it was causing me. And so, uh, what has changed has been, uh, the way the topics that we discussed are going to be constant. The, the four main aspects of breathe are pause, breathe, rest, and go.

Eliezer Velez ([00:44:29](#)):

We pause so that we can be self-compassionate. We breathe with that breath of compassion that takes care of the child that is inside of us, all of the good, the bad, and the ugly. It's okay. We need to love that child that's in there. And then we breathe, we pause, then we, what we are doing, uh, instead of living in the moment, what we are saying is, let us rest in the moment. Because our Vegas system has two positions, on or off, on its fight or flight off is rest and digest. So we don't live on rest and digest. We barely know the needle ever goes there. We are always, oh, we gotta, we gotta, we gotta go. So all of that tension, our system has lived with it forever. In my years of living, I know that my poor system, every time that I'm able to acquire a breath that really feels like it, or it just release something, I am aware now that's the Vegas system is releasing something. Um, Safiro had a really

good point on, uh, how our pain doesn't, doesn't go away. And it's part of this process, <inaudible>, that you wanna talk about that?

Safiro Velez ([00:45:58](#)):

Uh, yes, absolutely. Um, I, I do recall, uh, expressing that emotions are a lot like children. And sometimes, uh, or I would say for most people, most of the time, especially nowadays, we don't pay enough attention and care to at least acknowledge that they are there. We have been so accustomed to kind of pushing them aside and shelving them for later and then later never, never shows up. And they are waiting to be witnessed and held and then let go of, they, there's a process in our system that naturally needs to take place. And when we are not acknowledging those emotions for what they are, uh, and just allowing them to surface, and whatever needs to be processed in our system to be processed, to be witnessed, there is, there is a level of, of, um, work that these emotions and these chemicals in our body need to be, uh, going through in order to be processed and then let go of, so that way our bodies can function in a way where, where, uh, like you were saying, dad at rest, um, because we can't get to that place of rest until we've acknowledged these things that we've been putting off and saying later too.

Safiro Velez ([00:47:34](#)):

So when we have small moments every day to remember to breathe and acknowledge where in my body is there tension? What, where in my body is, is that tension tightening to? And what is it tightening because of, and noticing those small things. Where where is, where is their <inaudible> releasing? What, what help? Like where, what am I noticing about these things? And just that small practice can really help us come back into attunement with our bodies and not leaving them behind, uh, amidst the russell and bustle of everyday life.

Eliezer Velez ([00:48:15](#)):

Thank you. Um, I thought that was necessary to be input, because that ties into the question, what have I learned? Uh, how have I used it? I didn't realize that my emotions, uh, I am a very emotional person, uh, in general, um, uh, for that matter. I, uh, tend to be very empathic and, uh, I, I know that it runs in my family. So we are very emotional people, but we do not, we're not always, you know, crying in desperation. Um, uh, we are usually crying because there is someone is hurt, we ourselves are hurt, that kind of a thing. Um, but I wanted to point that out because ro speaking those things made me realize, oh, I, I have no idea that I'm this child. I mean, I hear about it, but I'm a 63-year-old going on 64 years old. I don't feel like, well, my body doesn't feel like a child.

Eliezer Velez ([00:49:22](#)):

I feel like a teenager. But, you know, to, to understand that there are emotions that are actually, uh, in need of attention, and that, that creates a void of something that gets filled with all this bad things that I don't want stressed in my life, it made me realize, okay, let's, let's talk about these things. And so let's see, now that I have this little bit more of information, how am I gonna, uh, how am I going to, uh, not attack the day, but more prepare myself? See, again, we pause, we breathe, we rest, and then we have motion. Then we go, we don't, before I would get up in the morning for thing, look at the email, stress, stress, stress, stress, stress. It. That's how the day started. And just, it just, it just kept, it just took off from there every single morning.

Eliezer Velez ([00:50:22](#)):

And that's not counting all of the personal situations that I've had, uh, battling homelessness for four months with my mom in tow fighting so that she wouldn't end up, you know, sleeping in my car, uh, because we had no place else to go. Uh, crazy, crazy things that happened that I just shoulder. I just thought, you know, I just gotta do it. Uh, but I didn't realize, you know, there are certain things that are humanly possible, but I do not believe it is humanly possible to go against our own selves. And that's what we do when we do not take an account in the morning, because that's when we are freer. And then to remember to take that, that small moment, which may have taken two minutes, five minutes, and do it throughout the day, sporadically, remember that we had a conversation about breathing. Let me pause before I take that phone call. Let me pause before I send that email. Look at the email, let me pause before I step out into the world. And so what we have found is that people have taken the idea, ran with it, and given us a feedback of, Hey, this happened to me and it worked. So it was very encouraging.

Amanda Esons ([00:51:38](#)):

It sounds like this came to be at really the right time, like this opportunity to breathe, to heal. It showed up at the opportune moment when you needed it. And earlier you spoke about, about sustainability. He said, there was a moment during the recording where I, I noticed, aha, this is going to be sustainable. , and you were just, you were observing that the sustainability around this piece and what you're doing. And I wonder if you found these practices to be sustainable for you, sustainable and bringing them in daily, the reminder to, to pause, to breathe to rest. Has that become second nature in some ways since you've been engaging with this?

Eliezer Velez ([00:52:33](#)):

Yes. The short answer is yes. Um, the most difficult thing about the podcast was for those nine Mondays, getting up and being on at six o'clock. I woke up at five I every day, every, uh, weekday. I have a meeting at five 30 for my job. So at six o'clock, I, I started to get ready at five or six o'clock. But just after my meeting was done, it was, even though I was ready, it was difficult to just like, oh, man, I could just go to sleep. Just catch a few Zs, it'd be great. Um, so it was, and it, it was something that I didn't realize that was taking a toll. Safito made me realize, because we were, we did nine, when we entered into the project, we indicated that we were going to be doing this for the remaining five Mondays, just only because there were nine, and we're at the end.

Eliezer Velez ([00:53:40](#)):

We could find out a lot about how this thing could work, if it works, if it's gonna crash and burn, we'll know in nine weeks. So we, we got up every morning and we did the things that we, uh, said we were going to do. We showed up. That was the most difficult part. Uh, but because I was, I was learning and bringing information in, I was already putting those things inside of me. So it's been a lot better. I, I have the history about the grant that I wrote, which came back with a, with, with a flawed mistake that they should have said, we're not even going to consider you. They came back, they said, we'll give you time to do it. And several other things happened. Eventually, they gave us the grant. It's a workforce development grant for my job, and I thank God so everybody's happy.

Eliezer Velez ([00:54:40](#)):

And I'm just grateful that even though I made that mistake, that email that first came in, which would've cost me to spend the whole night until I finish the thing in the morning, beating myself, punishing myself, that didn't happen. And because that didn't happen, as more emails come in and my

life continues, I am learning to do what Sofia says, take a pause before I take the email, take a pause before I make a phone call. And that just to pause, which was, she was instrumental, uh, in, in making sure that I did that, that has been very helpful for me. And I am more aware of my VAs system, and I am, um, more conscious as to the things that I want to do so that I can have those breath that release. 'cause you can tell when you take a deep breath, like if you, if you embrace somebody and you, you know, you are unguarded with somebody and you just hug them and you love them, there's a moment that if you just hold on, you both are gonna go and you're exhaling.

Eliezer Velez ([00:55:52](#)):

That deep exhalation, that's the word, uh, is what I am seeking all the time, because I know that for my whole life, I've been punishing myself, punishing myself, punishing myself. So my system, my vagus system, my vagus nerve is actually all of those major, uh, body organs that are working and stressed. So now getting them to release a little, it feels good. And if we can get other people to help us to spread the message, uh, and I think we can. I, um, uh, promised when we started, nobody told me to. I said, okay, we're gonna have a report, because, you know, when you do work like this and it's evidentiary things, do a report. So I'm, I started a report, uh, and decided to put it on a video format. So the video, it gives you an idea of to things we're discussing, uh, and the, it give you an idea as to how we moved along, and it has, uh, data of how many sessions, you know, due different things.

Eliezer Velez ([00:57:02](#)):

What was the content of the sessions. So, um, I, I think that it'll, it'll also give you an idea, um, and we're working on the other video that you mentioned, but it'll give you an idea more as if you had been at the, the events, because we're just discussing it and just bringing you in so that, you know, uh, we just saying this happened because of school. If, because I just labeled it, I just finished it last night. Uh, I tend to be a perfectionist. So if I don't, if I didn't just finalize it, I would've still been playing with it. So it's done. And then at the very end, I thanked everybody involved, um, uh, cu uh, colleagues. And, uh, also we put in, uh, a, an ai, um, uh, what is it? The word, the ai, uh, dis uh, not disclosure. Yeah. Instead of disclosure, um, because we did use ai, but, uh, it was, it was, as we are saying, so it wasn't like a, I put this thing together for us. The soul came from both of us and all amazing people that showed up.

Safiro Velez ([00:58:17](#)):

Yeah. And I especially agree that, uh, this was something that needed to be made public, because as an artist, I'm actually incredibly careful with ai. I don't typically use it because I have to think about, uh, you know, my responsibility as an artist and my responsibility to be, to have that, uh, uh, honesty with people about where specifically AI has been used. Um, so, uh, my dad is more experienced with ai. He has had loads and loads of, of, uh, information packed into it. So I just kind of trusted him with that process. And, you know, I, I agreed that, that this was something that needed to be mentioned, at least at the end, um, for, for that disclosure.

Amanda Esons ([00:59:12](#)):

So would you like to lead us through a 10 minute demo of what it's like, so list listeners can get a little taste of what it would be like if they joined Breathe?

Eliezer Velez ([00:59:26](#)):

First of all, we want to thank everybody for taking the time to be with us. We like to say that everyone that we meet is our teacher. It depends on how much inclined we are to learn from those individuals that come before us. So we are their teachers and their our, in that sense, we're all students. And so thank you for coming together to learn together, and more importantly, to breathe together. We have been figuring out something that to myself and my daughter had been a very well guarded secret. And it is that we are continually being pushed and shrunk and pulled in all these different directions, and we allow ourselves to be emotionally treated in this way. So today we we're just going to take a moment, just a quick moment to focus on ourselves, focus on how we feel, how my breath feels. Do I feel warm? Do I feel cold? Is it cozy in here?

Eliezer Velez ([01:01:07](#)):

Is there a draft? How does my body live in this environment and not be aware that there is a draft that would happen because my mind is focused on something else. So today, let us take a deep breath as, as deep as you can, uh, pull it in and hold it a moment and release it. And if you release more air than you pulled in, that begins to stimulate your vagus nerve into releasing pressure that has been hidden and that has been stored in all of our organs, in all of your organs, your lungs, your liver, your kidneys, everything inside of you is interconnected to your breath. So let's look at that breath again. There's a child inside of each of us, which is just looking to feel free and to not be scared, and to not be rushed, and to not be rushed continuously. So let us be grateful because that child has amazing potential, even at this stage in our lives, at my stage in my life. So let's take a deep breath in with gratitude for the child, but because we are able to actually breathe, I am grateful for the fact that I can breathe. So I'm going to invite you to join me with another two breaths as deep as you can take it, pull it in, and hold it, and release slowly looking to release more air than what you originally pulled in.

Eliezer Velez ([01:03:28](#)):

Now let's do that, that once more. Deep breath, grateful, let it go. Our inner child is always with us visually feeling neglected, mistreated, abandoned. But today we're going to, since we have paused to notice him and her, and we have taken a breath, we're going to learn to be resting in the moment in all hear, living in the moment. But I believe that when we take a breath for ourselves, a compassionate breath for ourselves, it must be for resting, because we are always engaging our Vagus system into fight or flight. And we rarely, if ever, engage our vagus system, rest or digest.

Eliezer Velez ([01:04:43](#)):

This means that every day we start the day charging, and we are putting pressure in our inner system, which saved all of those impressions through time. And that input needs to be released. Those, those negative feelings for yourself, for somebody else they need. But it all starts with each and every one of us, each and every day, taking as much time as possible to invest it in our greatest asset, which is our own breath. So we're gonna ask that you will take another breath, hold in a moment, and release more air than you took in.

Eliezer Velez ([01:05:53](#)):

And today might not have released any of that VA pressure that you have, but I guarantee you that if you keep taking these deliberate actions to pause, to breathe to rest, then you will be able to go into motion for the rest of whatever's left of the day. Take one more breath, hold it, and release more air than you took in. And notice how your head feel. Notice muscles that may have been, they may still be tense, but notice them. Be aware that you can work to release them by breathing. I leave you with this

picture of your child, your child being free, being intentional in self caring. You deserve that love. You deserve that love. You deserve that love. Thank you for listening.

Amanda Esons ([01:07:28](#)):

That was wonderful. Thank you so much. You're, you're a very good guide in this too. Eliezer I would say.

Eliezer Velez ([01:07:36](#)):

Um, yeah, I, I, I try to put myself in the shoes or the heart of the people. And sometimes, you know, I get ideas as to, you know, if I was this, what would I ask for? What would I say? What would be a beautiful statement? And it, it comes from my own pain. And whenever STO comes up with all these different things, and I understand it's her own pain, she's able to hold onto that. And so she's able to do it as well. Um, I happen to talk a lot, so it's easier for me. <inaudible> has a more soothing voice, though, that, that's my estimation.

Safiro Velez ([01:08:23](#)):

Well, I appreciate that, <laugh>. Yeah, I have been told, um, several times that I, I, I put people to sleep because of my voice, because it's calming. Um, but I also, uh, depending on, you know, whose turn it is for the week to present after, uh, after Eliezer presents, he, uh, he usually leans on, uh, me to do the meditation at the end of his presentation. Um, that's what I feel most comfortable with sometimes because it's, it's very, uh, like he said, it's, it's very simple to kind of consider for a moment what the week has presented for you and to kind of offer encouraging words, calming words to the people who need it, for that, for that morning.

Amanda Esons ([01:09:17](#)):

Beautiful. And I, I think it's so incredible to the relationship. creating a project together, and something that's so transformative as this work. Is there anything that you've learned about each other that's new since you've been collaborating on this project together, developing this podcast?

Safiro Velez ([01:09:42](#)):

I feel I have learned, uh, especially with, um, with this new project that, um, my dad has, my dad and I, we've collaborated before on, on other projects before cu, but this project was a little bit more different because I was able to see, um, how hands-on he has been with his, uh, video editing and his ability to kind of, uh, piece those things together. I have never seen my dad more passionate about any other thing except like, let me put this thing, these pieces into this video and put it together. Um, and that's very exciting for me to see because, um, I'm, I've seen, um, and I've, I've grown up in, under his household. And so to watch him be passionate about something that's, uh, and to talk about something that's not specifically work, that's not, you know, wherever his attention is, that's, um, uh, it's not on himself sometimes, uh, it's just nice to see that he's doing this for himself first. Uh, and then, you know, witness how that has affected other people in such a positive and impactful way.

Amanda Esons ([01:11:09](#)):

Thank you so much, Eliezer and Safiro for taking the time and for sharing this work with all of us. And if listeners wanna find you, how can they tune in to breathe?

Safiro Velez ([01:11:21](#)):

Absolutely. You can reach out to us either through our individual emails or see you emails, um, or you can, uh, check in on C'S monthly email and there will be a post about the times, what Breathe is about, and the link is also included there. So you can log in every Monday morning.

Amanda Esons ([01:11:50](#)):

And is this for the CU community or is it open for anybody, or is that gonna come later on?

Safiro Velez ([01:11:57](#)):

This is absolutely open for anyone. It is focused on CU students because we are still in beta. However, you know, uh, anyone is welcome. We've had families kind of come in, uh, from through a CU student who have mentioned how much this has changed their lives, and we're excited to open that up to more families who may feel like they need a moment for themselves to breathe, uh, away from the stressors that life throws at us.

Eliezer Velez ([01:12:30](#)):

Yes. Also, uh, again, remember we're all children, so because we, we are telling you about it, but I forget. So it, it's, it's, it's a thing that I think it's, it's almost like, uh, it's, uh, an endearing thing. It's like, I want you to be, well breathe, take a breath, right? Even we're done, but goes through my mind is childbirth. They ask the woman to breathe. Isn't that interesting? She's gonna be breathing regardless, but the breathing has, there's a process in the breathing that helps apparently in the birthing process, which I know nothing about. Uh, I mean, I, I was witness to s Sophia's birth and I was witness to her, uh, sister's birth. But, uh, I wanna thank you for the opportunity to share the, the novelty, the amazing novelty that is self-compassionate breathing. You have yourself a great week as well.

Amanda Esons ([01:13:40](#)):

Thank you so much, Safiro and Eliezer for all the work that you're doing and for creating this thoughtful, incredible gift of a project. And Breathe your podcast.