

N.Y.B.L. Podcast Ep 182 (Shirin Etessam)

[00:00:00] **Rebecca Zung:** Welcome to another episode of Negotiate Your Best Life. I am really excited to dive into this episode. I have Shereen Atam here with me and she is, uh, well, we started talking a little bit before this episode started, and wow. Are you guys in for a treat? She is. Well, she has. Produced TV shows and she's an author, but really what she's gonna be talking about today is how to break free, how to follow your bliss, how to find meaning within your soul.

[00:00:43] Her brand new book actually is dropping today with the day that we're recording this. Episode and it's called Free to Be. And it's taking everything she's learned how her, all of her soul work and distilling it down into a [00:01:00] simple six week process that anyone can do anywhere. I mean, how I, how amazing is that?

[00:01:09] So welcome, welcome, welcome, Shereen.

[00:01:13] **Shirin Etessam:** Thank you so much for having me on your show. Ah,

[00:01:16] **Rebecca Zung:** I am so excited. So, Tell us about you. Where did this all start? Where did Shereen start?

[00:01:24] **Shirin Etessam:** Um, As a tiny, tiny human being. Um, so my background, um, uh, is, well, I'm from Iran. Um, uh, my family migrated here when I was quite young.

[00:01:41] And, um, professionally my background is as a media executive and, um, an entrepreneur. Um, I've checked off a lot of boxes as, um, as we do, a lot of us have, [00:02:00] and I, um, was living what I thought was a pretty sweet life. Um, and at the end of 2013, I went through a major life event. Uh, my partner, my, my partner who I was with for 13 years, um, and I.

[00:02:22] Broke up in a 20 minute conversation and we had been good friends for nine years prior to that. So 22 years of love, friendship, partnership, commitment, loyalty, um, vanished after 20 minutes and it completely, I. Appended me. I, um, and it was frightening for me and confusing, um, because I had not felt that broken before.

[00:02:56] And I realized fairly early on that. [00:03:00] It wasn't a matter of a broken heart. Um, everything felt broken. And the confusing part was, um, as I mentioned, I had checked off so many boxes and, um, I didn't understand why, why I felt so broken. So I set out on a six year journey and left no stones unturned, looked in every nook and cranny and, um, Completely transformed my life, and I'd like to say that it was just shiny and glorious and wonderful, but it was challenging and difficult and dark and confusing, and the aha moments were incredible and overall transformation completely shifted my life.

[00:03:53] And, uh, so. Coming out of those six years and really [00:04:00] seeing the lights, so to speak, and, and a completely different way. And again, it wasn't like I was down in the dumps and then suddenly, you know, I became this amazing person. I, it was always within me. It's just that like, now I'm like, feel like I'm walking Wonder Woman, you know?

[00:04:23] And, uh, So when in reflection, when I looked at the journey that I had taken and what I had learned, I realized that if I knew what I was doing when I first started, that my entire process could truly be distilled into six weeks. And, and, and I really mean six weeks cuz people are like, you know, give us three pointers that, that people can do today.

[00:04:52] And I'm like, I've shrunk it down from six years to six weeks. And it's intentionally structured the way that it's [00:05:00] structured. So there is, I, I can't, um, abbreviate it anymore. But, um, so I wrote the book basically that I wish I had when I was at that crossroad and, and very much on my knees. But I have to also say that the book is really intended for anyone who feels that they are living a muted life, that there is this voice, this.

[00:05:31] Inner yearning that says there is so much more because there is so much more. Mm-hmm.

[00:05:38] **Rebecca Zung:** I mean, don't you feel in a lot of ways, many of us are living that way? I mean, I think most people feel like they were born for more in some ways, like it's their soul speaking to them. Don't you feel?

[00:05:56] **Shirin Etessam:** Well there is, uh,[00:06:00]

[00:06:01] We're all born. I mean, you look at babies and toddlers and every, they're Gogo Gaga and they are glowing and, you know, living, they're, they're, they are living schwa, Debi, you know, there is no like, searching for their passion there. Right? Which is why they're so magnetic. And then, um, you

know, we, and there's studies behind this, somewhere between age zero and five, zero and seven.

[00:06:27] We detach or even disassociate from our true essence, that core, that inner knowing, that inner magic, that inner star. And um, the more we adult, the further we move away from it. And when we stop taking our cues as or as the.

[00:06:51] When we stop taking our cues from our inner core, we start taking our cues from the outside. So instead of living from the out [00:07:00] inside in, we live from the outside in. And um, and then there's layers of it and layers of it. And layers of it, and layers of it. So, um, most of us. Don't even know. Like people say, you know, follow your bliss or look within, you know, I'm like, okay, if, if people haven't done their any work, I'm like, okay, close your eyes and look within, what do you see?

[00:07:28] It's usually nothing, you know, because you can't see if we've got years of muck and white noise and all of that, how do we see. You know, how do we see deep down there? So, um, so my, so my book is structured so that there's, the first part of it is a lot of excavation, and the second part of it is that once you connect with your soul, what do you do with it?

[00:07:56] But to answer, um, your question, I think, you know, everybody [00:08:00] is certainly born with a soul that is, um, screaming, playing out loud. And, um, it becomes muted over the years. Mm-hmm. So, um, I, I think many, many of us are living muted lives. Yeah.

[00:08:18] **Rebecca Zung:** So tell us about this six week process. I mean, because I think a lot of people feel more than muted.

[00:08:25] I think a lot of people feel broken, you know, so, you know, how, how do they pick up these pieces? Yeah. So,

[00:08:34] **Shirin Etessam:** um, And, and I think that if you are new on your journey or if there's, um, you know, something that's been whispering in you and you want to give it a try, um, I think that the book serves as a really great primer.

[00:08:53] And I think that if people have been on this journey for some time, I [00:09:00] think, and um, those who I know who have read it, Um, have verified that they feel validated by what they read, like, oh yeah. Oh yeah. Thank you for reminding me of that. So, um, the book again is very

intentionally structured the way it is, and there's a, a few things on the background.

[00:09:25] Um, one is that, um, as I mentioned, it's in two parts. Um, so three weeks and three weeks. And the reason I made them three weeks each is because there's some studies on habits being made or broken, uh, within 21 day, um, timeframe. It's not that cookie cutter, but uh, there is some of that baked in. And then I also made the process very experiential.

[00:09:59] So [00:10:00] there's exercises throughout. And that's important because I wanted it to feel like a immersive experience and not have it be conceptual. Um, I say that it's the difference between thinking about jumping out of a plane skydiving and actually doing it like, oh, you know. Um, so, uh, the first, uh, week is all about.

[00:10:32] Detoxing our mind because that's where, that's the biggest culprit. It's the thing that stands in our way. And I could talk more about that. Week two, which I think will particularly resonate with, um, your listeners and, and viewers is all about our heart, detoxing our heart. And week three is about detoxing our body, but not the way that we.

[00:10:59] Would [00:11:00] think about it beyond the eating right, sleeping right and such, um, but truly honoring our bodies as our only sacred vessel through this life. And then the second part is, so you do a lot of excavating and, um, once you've, you've done so, uh, it actually becomes a byproduct because you are, uh, I should say connecting with your soul becomes a byproduct of all the excavating.

[00:11:30] So once you find your soul Oh yeah. Where you've been, not, not that it

[00:11:35] **Rebecca Zung:** ever left, but Yeah.

[00:11:37] **Shirin Etessam:** Right. But I mean actually seeing it, like truly looking within and, and seeing it. Yeah. Um, then what do you do with it? So chapter four is my very, very favorite, um, chapter of the book, which is all about play. And I could talk about that, the importance of play, um, in adults, in and for [00:12:00] adults.

[00:12:00] Uh, week five is pretty much is as woo woo as I get. Um, and that is all about, uh, finding one's true north and the dance between soul and spirit and how the soul is different. Than the spirit, but both are very needed. And um,

week six is about rewriting one story. Mm-hmm. Um, I called it for a while, the working title of the book was Manifesto, like You mean it, um, the o being in parentheses and in manifesto.

[00:12:36] So manifesto like you mean it. And, um, it's also everything is very step by step. I wanted to hold people's hand and walk them through it so it isn't like, Hey, go live your best life. I actually have like a Venn diagram of how to rewrite your story, so, yeah.

[00:12:57] **Rebecca Zung:** Well, I'm, um, I'm gonna go back to [00:13:00] chapter one.

[00:13:00] How do you, like excavate your mind? Because I always joke that I, I'm, I can never leave my thoughts unsupervised like

[00:13:10] **Shirin Etessam:** that. Well, that's actually a gorgeous leaping point. So we go through life believing everything we think. Multiple studies show that we have somewhere between 17 to 65,000 thoughts daily.

[00:13:31] 80% of them are negative, 95% of them are repetitive. So, um, what you are supervising is a massive negative washing machine that's happening. And we believe it. We wake up at 3:00 AM and believe it. I used to go into major panic attacks right around 3:00 AM and I was a total insomniac cuz I thought, you know, if I didn't hold the world together, who would?[00:14:00]

[00:14:00] And the truth of it is that our mind, you know, they, the Magdala have a section, um, in, uh, chapter one. Um, About the Magdala, and I call it, um, I call her Amy g Dala, and I say that Amy and I have a, uh, love hate relationship because the magdala truly doesn't know the difference between perceived fear and real fear.

[00:14:27] So it, it comes in handy if you're about to get hit by a car or fall off a cliff, but it act, you know, the, the same. Thought process, the same patterns happen when you think about, you know, someone who may cause you harm, um, which may not be real at all, or something that will happen that may not happen at all, and it's the same level of it.[00:15:00] [00:16:00] [00:17:00]

[00:17:47] Reminding our thoughts are super important and the way that we do that, um, and I am not the first to say it, is to step outside of them. Meditation [00:18:00] is a great way of doing that. I talk and not, but not everybody is a meditator, so I talk about various ways of doing that. But truly the ability to step

outside of one's thinking and realize that we are having thoughts, thoughts do not have us, was one of the biggest aha moments I've ever had.

[00:18:24] And it's one of those things like riding a bike that once you get it, you can't unknow it. So now when I go into panic mode or whatever, I'm like, could this be real? Yeah. Could it be not real? Yeah. Am I gonna hold onto it now? So, and, and you know, there's the, the, um, story of the wolf You feed. Um, I don't know if you know that native Oh, I'm very

[00:18:50] **Rebecca Zung:** familiar, but I don't know if our listeners are.

[00:18:52] So, yeah, I think it's great. It's a, it's basically yeah. Native America story. Yeah.

[00:18:57] **Shirin Etessam:** Yeah, uh, uh, um, [00:19:00] a child goes to, um, a chief, um, and says, um, you know, uh, I have these, um, uh, you know, I have good thoughts, bad thoughts, and I'm not sure what to do with it. And, um, and he compares it basically, I'm totally paraphrasing, but he compares it to, um, a, uh, Uh, mad, um, dangerous wolf or a peaceful wolf, and, and basically says, it really depends on which one you feed.

[00:19:38] That's the one that becomes stronger. So, and again, I'm totally paraphrasing, but, um, so we can't control what comes into our minds, but we can certainly control what we concentrate on. So that's, uh, part one of, uh, the book. I mean the, the week. And then the other part of it is [00:20:00] really limiting the content that we consume because from the time that we wake up to the time that we sleep, we are bombarded with content and so much of it is mental junk food.

[00:20:13] So I, um, spend some time talking about how to do that. Um, so between those two, there are. Other little nuggets as well. But those are the two big nuggets of that chapter. Um, and um, once who actually practice it, it is life changing. So,

[00:20:36] **Rebecca Zung:** yeah, that's a good point. I know for me, I always joke that, uh, you know, if I don't supervise my thoughts, I end up like, you know, in the ghetto somewhere like, like that neighborhood, the new home, you know?

[00:20:50] So all, so now let's head into week two, which is the heart, I think

[00:20:55] **Shirin Etessam:** you said. Yeah. Week two I think will really resonate [00:21:00] with your, um, your viewers and listeners because it is all about the heart and what is most important about our relationship with our heart is to not task it with the wrong things. So they say, follow your heart, which is a complete misnomer.

[00:21:29] People refer to our hearts as the inner child. I call it our inner puppy, because truthfully, what does that inner child want or that inner puppy want? It wants to be loved, it wants to be encouraged. It wants to be supported. It wants to be cared for. Would you allow your child or your puppy to lead the way?

[00:21:54] No. When, so when people say follow your heart, they truly mean [00:22:00] follow your soul. Your heart needs protection. It needs your attention, it needs your care, and, and that is all. So feel all the feels. I talk about the, the basic emotions and the complex emotions and why there is the need for them and not making one good or bad.

[00:22:24] Like we're also, you know, such happy addicts, right. Be happy. Be happy. Mm-hmm. And, and truly it's contentment that we're aiming for, not happiness, because happiness is ephemeral. It comes, it goes much like our thoughts. It's contentment fulfillment that is lasting. One of the most important parts of the chapter is, uh, what I call, it's a filtration system that I call taser, shield, fill, or [00:23:00] hug.

[00:23:00] Mm-hmm. And again, I think this will resonate with your, uh, viewers and listeners. The shield is, and I tell people I say that. Because I believe so strongly that one's heart needs protection. Yeah. And frankly, by protecting it, by caring for, if you truly set it free, because again, it's not bogged down by tasks that it doesn't need to do your heart or your soul.

[00:23:27] I mean, your mind or your soul can take care of it. But the I, I tell people to gauge situations and people in their lives. As you interact within it or with them, does this person expand or contract my heart? And you will know the answer fairly immediately and you should really listen to it. But the filtration system that I, I talk about in the chapter is called taser shield, filter, [00:24:00] hug.

[00:24:00] Taser are those toxic people that should not be in your life, and you know them taser them out. And not like real taser, but emotionally, mentally, uh, psychologically, spiritually taser them out. Shield is a little bit more difficult because, um, those are people that are difficult, who you have to have in your life.

[00:24:26] Maybe it is, um, your ex who you have to co-parent with, or a boss that you may not particularly like. Creating very, very strong boundaries with those people and keeping them. Uh, filter is not oversharing yourself with, not everybody is your people. So don't go on social and just share, um, you the fight that you had with your neighbor or, you know, whatever it is.

[00:24:56] If. People don't have full context for [00:25:00] what you are going through. They're gonna add their own story and it's just, it's not gonna go the way you want it to. So do not overshare. And then, uh, the hug section is my favorite. Um, that's your drive. Those are, um, uh, people who, as Brene Brown says, have, um, earned.

[00:25:20] A seat at your table and those people you allow to criticize you, you go deep with them and you are very, very real with them. So, and I could talk on and on about, um, uh, week two, but it is especially important for those who are in unhealthy relationships or in relationships with narcissists. Because it isn't a matter of really even dealing with the other person.

[00:25:59] It [00:26:00] is truly protecting your heart in a, in a way that protection is so evident that they can't penetrate it. Mm-hmm. So it isn't this. Battle. It's, it is purely creating this like super defiant, I don't even wanna call it, like an aura that they can't per penetrate. Mm.

[00:26:27] **Rebecca Zung:** I love that. So, I, I, there's just a couple and we don't have enough time to get into all the things that I wanna get into here.

[00:26:38] You know, you reference a daily purge. What is that?

[00:26:43] **Shirin Etessam:** So the daily purge is, um, pretty awesome and really quick to do. Um, so I suggest that we talked about that washing machine of negativity, right? It needs to go somewhere [00:27:00] and not everybody is a meditator. Meditating is amazing. If you can do it, some people will frankly, you know, run it out and, and such.

[00:27:10] The daily purge is basically six minutes of word vomiting. It's, it's, it's purging out any negative thought that come into your head. So instead of it cycling around in your head, it actually moves through you and out, and as ridiculous as it sounds, try it once. Just try it once. For six minutes, and it is so cleansing and empowering.

[00:27:47] Like, it's just like the, the, the morning, it's like a mini meditation, uh, because there's an outlet for the. That negative stream. And once [00:28:00]

it is out, you're able to clear, clearly think. Then you know Amy, Amy G is not in, um, power at that point. And you could go about your day and those who have done it, Like anytime I come onto an interview, they're like, talk about the Daily Purge.

[00:28:18] Talk about the Daily Purge because it's just like a little special gift you could give yourself. So saying it or are you writing it in a journal? You could write it in a journal. You could doodle it, you could cartwheel and do it. I do this like really weird, um, crazy dance. We used to call it jungle dancing when I was in high school and now I'm doing it.

[00:28:41] So I You do, I do this. Like dance and I say it at the same time while, um, you know, but you could be running and, and, uh, do it, you know, you could. Like I said, you can cartwheel and do it. You can, um, you know, you can meditate and, and do it, [00:29:00] but I think that it's important that you say the words out loud so that it truly gets out of you.

[00:29:06] So, I, I dance and I do it, but everybody, whatever that activity is, and I list a variety of activities that you can do, but whatever resonates with you because if you're sitting there and it feels cumbersome to write, I. Then you're concentrating on, you know, that rather than it being the purge that it needs to be.

[00:29:31] **Rebecca Zung:** So I have a saying, and it seems like you have a saying that's sort of similar. I always say stop trying to make Not your people. Your people.

[00:29:43] **Shirin Etessam:** Yeah. I mean I would, I would add to that like, you know that if you do the work of the work, you'll have no desire to. And you have

[00:29:52] **Rebecca Zung:** a saying like, not everybody is our

[00:29:54] **Shirin Etessam:** people. A absolutely not everybody is our people.
[00:30:00] And uh, and the more work you do on yourself, the more you realize it. And like I mentioned fairly instantly, that like, you know, and, and again, it isn't like those people are bad.

[00:30:13] My people are good. It's, you know, like, bless them, send them on, on their way, but they don't need to be in your life.

[00:30:20] **Rebecca Zung:** Yeah, I always say send them light, but over there, over there it's,

[00:30:25] **Shirin Etessam:** and, and also, you know, like forgiveness is, it's very much the same thing. Like, you can truly forgive someone and I, and some forgiveness happens.

[00:30:38] You know, it could be a one-time thing. Some forgiveness, much like grief takes a really long time. But you go through the process and you release, but that does not mean that that person is invited back at all. I mean, there are

[00:30:57] **Rebecca Zung:** no, and it doesn't mean you're saying, oh, they got [00:31:00] away with it or anything like that.

[00:31:01] It's for

[00:31:02] **Shirin Etessam:** you. It has nothing to do with them. It has nothing to do with them or what happened. It's purely releasing them from. The hold that they have on your soul because they don't deserve it.

[00:31:18] **Rebecca Zung:** Exactly. Oh, that's such a beautiful way of putting it. Love that. Oof. So good. All right, so where can people find your book and you and everything else about you?

[00:31:34] **Shirin Etessam:** So anything related to me as an author or the book, uh, or. Transformational Speaking is in my name, so sharin@asam.com. My social handles are also Shereen at asam, which we'll put it all in

[00:31:52] **Rebecca Zung:** the show notes by the way.

[00:31:53] **Shirin Etessam:** Yeah, and um, so find me there. And, uh, um, my book [00:32:00] is on various platforms. Amazon and Barnes and Noble are probably the easiest, but, um, it's distributed through Simon and Schuster and I've been really pushing them to get me into, in the, um, brick and mortar stores.

[00:32:15] So hopefully you'll find it there as well. Yes, so

[00:32:20] **Rebecca Zung:** good. This is awesome. Everybody needs to go buy the book, follow her and check her out and make sure that you, you know, do the work. This is great stuff. Love it. How cool is this? I love it. Thank you so much. Really appreciate you. This is great. Thank you

[00:32:42] **Shirin Etessam:** so much for having me on your show.

[00:32:45] **Rebecca Zung:** Thank you.