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Michelle ([00:02](#)):

Welcome to the Finding Refuge Podcast. My name is Michelle Cassandra Johnson, and I am glad you're here. The Finding Refuge Podcast emerged from a desire to have conversations about the intersection of grief and liberation. This podcast explores how we can find refuge during unsettling and uncertain times. It features guests from various backgrounds, lineages, and lived experiences. I hope you enjoy listening.

([00:47](#)):

I am so happy to be bringing this conversation forth with Nikki Myers. Nikki is a teacher, a friend, a mentor, and it was so lovely to be in conversation with her. Let me tell you a little bit more about Nikki Myers, an accomplished speaker and teacher. Nikki is a 500hr RYT, yoga therapist, somatic experiencing practitioner, addictions recovery specialist, and Ayurvedic specialist. Born from her personal struggles with addiction, deep study, and work with countless students. Nikki is the founder of Y 12 Sr. Yoga of 12 Step Recovery. Based on its theme, the issues live in the tissues. Y 12 SR is a relapse prevention program that weaves yoga, neuroscience, and trauma healing with the practical tools of 12-step programs. Why 12 SR meetings are available internationally, and the curriculum has rapidly become a feature of addiction recovery treatment centers.

([01:57](#)):

Nikki's work has been featured in the New York Times Black Enterprise, the Huffington Post, origin Magazine, c b s News and countless podcasts. She is honored to be a co-founder of the annual Yoga, meditation and Recovery Conferences at Eson Institute and Kapalo Center for Yoga and Health. Nikki has been featured as a speaker at the International Association of Yoga Therapist Conference, international Conference on Integrative Medicine at Harvard Medical School and the 2022 Clinton Global Initiative. She was named a yoga journal game changer, and is an honored recipient of the esteemed Nevo Cultural Visionary Award. I hope you all enjoy listening to this beautiful episode with myself and Nikki Myers. Nikki, I am so excited to see you and to share space with you. Often we're like on panels together in spaces, but not, but not like in a conversation with just us <laugh>

Nikki ([03:06](#)):

Except on text,

Michelle ([03:08](#)):

Right? That's true. We do text, but this feels very different. So thank you for saying yes to being a guest on the podcast and yeah, for being here with me today.

Nikki ([03:20](#)):

I'm delighted. Um, you know, there's no way I would've miss being in conversation with you. I so appreciate who you are and your work. I just love and adore you, and I know you know that. So grateful for that

Michelle ([03:34](#)):

<laugh>. Yes. And I love and adore you as well. And I was, I'm trying to remember when we first met, and I feel like, I mean, I knew I had heard of you, but I think the first time we were in physical space may have been at the Lululemon Something Summit. I don't know what it was called. Is that when we first met? Or

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maybe we met somewhere else, but I know we saw we you were there and we like spent time together and I remember that.

Nikki ([03:59](#)):

Yeah. I'm thinking the first time we met though was something with Seane. Right?

Michelle ([04:06](#)):

Probably. It was

Nikki ([04:06](#)):

Something that was going on there. And you know, like you, I knew you who you were and you know, already felt a sense of your being, but that was the first time that, that we, if I remember it right, it was something that was going on with Sean.

Michelle ([04:22](#)):

That's probably right. Um, and for those listening, we're referencing Seane Corn to be, to be clear Yes. For those who might be wondering. Yes. Um, and since we first met, we've, we've, as I said, been on panels and in spaces together, and, um, it's just delightful to have you here and I would love for you to share some about who you are, what you're up to in the world, anything you wanna share with.

Nikki ([04:45](#)):

I love that. Thank you. Thank you. And I think I'm gonna do it the way that I always do it wherever I am, just because, um, it's a lens into me, right? It's just a lens into me. So, you know, I usually, my pronouns are she, her, and we, and I always usually give a little explanation about what that we is really all about. And the, the, for me, it, the way that I usually do it, no matter where I am, is that, you know, I'm a yoga teacher. I'm a yoga therapist, I'm a somatic experiencing practitioner, um, you know, founder of Y Psar, which is the Yoga 12 sep recovery and all of that. And, and the big three letter word is and. Right? And I'm an addict. I'm an alcoholic. I'm a co-dependent. I'm the survivor of bull childhood and adult sexual trauma. I'm a love addict. I'm a recovering debtor spender. I'm a former commercial sex worker and <laugh>, and I'm the mother of two living and one deceased child. I'm the grandmother of five, and this is one you don't know. I'm the great-grandmother of now, almost seven. I got a new one coming, <laugh>.

Michelle ([06:00](#)):

Wow.

Nikki ([06:01](#)):

Seven great grandchil-dren. Right? It blows my mind. Just blows my mind. Um, and you know, I, the other piece is Anne, I am, um, uh, a spiritual, and I almost don't wanna say seeker, but lover. And I am a lover like you of all things dogs, right? <laugh>

Michelle ([06:24](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Nikki ([06:25](#)):

Uh, really a, a a lover of life. And, you know, I always love to say that with connected with the ands because the discovery is that there's a we inside of me. There's a we inside of me, and all of those are parts. And what I've discovered, and, you know, think about this one, think about from my studies, the divine mother, there are thousand names for the divine mother, right? And just like there are all these pieces inside of me, and what I've discovered is that when I, I stop the nonsense of making one part of myself bad off and wrong, and another part of myself, right? And wonderful and praiseworthy and all those kinds of things, when I stop that good, bad, right, wrong and all that stuff with that and gather and bring them all in, and, you know, reintegrate parts of myself that I've left here, there, and everywhere, and bring them all in, right?

([07:25](#)):

Then I get to recognize that while all of them inform my walk in this plane of existence, truthfully, none of them define me. None of those things define me. But it's only by gathering them and stopping the internal war and the fight that goes on when I don't acknowledge that I even get the opportunity to recognize that you're, I'm something much, much more. And none of them defined me. And I always love doing that because that lens informs my work. It informs everything I do, you know, in the world. And it's helped me to make a profound peace with myself, right? And when I'm in an, an, a quiet mind and have peace with myself, I show up a whole lot differently in the world. And so, um, you know, when I'm giving people insights and doing introductions, this is the way that I, you know, offer who it is <laugh> that I am, and continue to become in the world. <laugh>.

Michelle ([08:26](#)):

Yeah. Thank you for your answer and the depth and it, and the spiritual knowing, I would say expressed through your answer and the way you answered the question. And it's make, it really makes me think about the we, what you said, wholeness and integration. And I also this awareness that you're, you're, everything you named and you're not, right? You're something bigger than that, beyond the identities that you named or the experiences you've had in this incarnation of yourself. And I've thought about that a lot more over the last, I don't know, five years, like consciously aware. Uh, you are a spiritual being, right? And have said that hundreds of times over the last five years, I would say, in a, in a different way. So I understand it differently and it than I did before. And it, it's so much more expansive to remember. We're like bigger than these, these things, our identities, the things we've done, the things we don't like about ourselves, things we love, you know, like we're, we're bigger than that. And it's expansive. So I really appreciate you naming, naming that. And it, and I'm curious to know, and this is, there's probably, we could, like, this may be the question for the podcast, <laugh>, but I'm curious to know what led you, what process did you move through to come to a place of like integration or the, the we and the awareness of it, or the peace you spoke about to find peace?

Nikki ([09:49](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. What a great question. Um, it, it was that, you know, I had to surrender <laugh> to, so if I, if I had to use one word to describe the process, actually, I would use two words. And the two words are trustful, surrender. You know, it's not just surrender. Surrender can often be confused with resignation, right? That, you know, I'm resigned to do this, or, you know, I'm going to do this because of this. But a trustful surrender is different, right? It, it really feels completely different. It really is the, almost the antithesis to the, to the, uh, resignation. And what I've continued to discover is this whole thing is deeper and deeper levels of surrender. It's deeper and deeper levels of that trustful surrender. And, you know, the, I

was speaking about gathering all parts of myself when, when before that realization, there was this internal war, you know, I was denying one part of myself and praising another part of myself.

(11:05):

And there was all this war. There was a fissure, you know, a real fissure within my being and when I could learn and accept and, and all of that to, to bring everyone in, right? That, that everyone gets to join the party, right? <laugh> then, then that internal war stopped, and then I could start the process of really negation, right? Negation meaning, you know, I'm really not this identity. I'm really not this identity. All of 'em are in here, but I'm not really, you know, it's the chipping away, right? <laugh>. And I could really peacefully start that chipping away from, from, um, a space of inner harmony versus that space of fight versus that space of conflict. And that's been the process. And I'm, I'm continuing to chip away at, oh, no, not this, not that, not <laugh>, right? And then, you know, the idea is the way I always phrase it. Anyway, we've had all this programming and conditioning and shit dumped on top of our wholeness, right? And so the process to get back at wholeness is chipping away all that programming, that conditioning, all that shit, right? And so it, the that's exactly if we wanted to, and then I can surrender, right? <laugh>, and then I can't trustfully let go. So it, it, uh, the process has been surrender, chipping away negation more than <laugh> more than anything else.

Michelle (12:49):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you're making me think about, well, the path of yoga and the higher self, the big Fs self, and remembering the truth of who we are and the process we have to go through. And it's an ongoing process for many people. Everyone I know, ongoing process to remember there is a larger self. And it's also making me think about ish fire pano, one of the niyamas for folks listening, which is they're the niyamas are, it's the second limb of the eight limb path of yoga. And they're really about ha observances towards self or for, for you as an individual, although they have an effect in the outer world as well. And iShare prana is at times translated as trust will surrender or surrender to spirit or God, um, or that which is bigger than you is another way to think about it. And it just came through in what you were, what you were talking about, and the way you talked about trust will surrender and the ch the chipping away that has to occur before we can actually be in that space of trustful surrender. And again, I think it's waves of, it's, it's ongoing. And you talked about it that way too. Like, it's not, we didn't, we didn't, you didn't arrive there. It sounds like there's still moments where you're like, I have to chip away at this thing. I gotta negate this isn't really who I am. And now I can surrender.

Nikki (14:11):

Absolutely. And I suspect that, you know, as long as I'm in this plane of existence, that it will continue to be that, that process. I always think about that Malcolm X quote, right? And the quote is, once you think you got it, you lost it. Right? <laugh>, and I love that quote, right? Once you think you got it, you lost it. So I don't want, I did that right in, in the throes of, of addiction. My, my process through that has been relapsed. I relapsed there. I was eight years clean, then after going through the shit, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, eight years clean, then I relapsed. And then I was another four years clean, and I relapsed again. And I recognized part of that error was I thought I had it right. I thought I got this, you know, I'm good. I don't need to do this shit anymore.

(15:04):

I need, I got this. I'm good. Right? And, and then, uh, I thought I had it, and as soon as I thought I had it, I lost it. And I found myself right back in the throes of the same stuff. And there's a, a beautiful humility

about that, right? A beautiful humility. And, you know, uh, I, I'm not pretending like I even got it anymore. I don't even know what it is. So <laugh> mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, it's just continuing to put one foot in front of the other and, and being here for the inquiry and for the investigation and for, you know, the work, <laugh> mm-hmm.

Michelle ([15:48](#)):

<affirmative>, I love this so much because it's, it's, I'm 47 and it's making me think about each, as each year passes, I, I'm like, I don't know. Like, the more I say, I don't know, it's just, it increases right? Each year. Like, what do I really know? Is this real? Is this happen? You know? Like, and, and just thinking about conditioning around, you do this thing and then you arrive in this place, and then you know these things, or you should strive to know these things. And I, there's so much freedom in being like, I don't, I don't really know. I

Nikki ([16:21](#)):

Don't even know what, I dunno. I don't even know what I don't even know. Right? I love it. And you're right, there's a beautiful humility in that. And there's a, a beautiful ability, you know, and you're 47, I'm kicking 70, right? I'm getting ready to be 70 mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I don't even know what I don't know. And I can trustfully surrender into that today. Right. <laugh> that I <laugh>.

Michelle ([16:49](#)):

Yeah. I love that. I love it. It's because, you know, in so many ways we're actually talking about practice and the path of, of yoga, spiritual practice. And I would, I wanna know more about how you came to this path of seeking out in this way that you described a little bit earlier when you answered who you are. Like how did you come to yoga?

Nikki ([17:13](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Um, through addiction, right? Through really the throes of, of addiction, right? And then, you know, and when I say addiction, it, it's the, the bigger de definition of a beyond a substance, right? I assert, we were talking a little bit about the yoga sutures, um, a little bit earlier. And when I look at it and kind of distill in my own words and in my own life, what Paton Lee was saying, particularly as he talks about, as Paton Lee talks about the glaciers and avidia and all that, ultimately we're all addicted to the way we process our reality, right? We're all, we all get a, and it's so easy to do in, in, in what we're in, in the matrix, right? We're in the matrix, and it's so easy to do, right? And so it was, it was from the, the throes of addiction and, and recognizing, you know, how none of that was working, right? <laugh>,

([18:21](#)):

None of, of that, that, that, looking outside of myself for something that was only gonna come from the inside, which in my work is the way we find, define addiction, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, when I am so busy looking outside of myself for something that's only gonna come in, it's easy to form an addictive relationship with anything and everything. Like, you know, I, I've had an addictive relationship with Nordstroms, right? <laugh>, because I want that bag or that, and commercialism and capitalism sets that shit up, right? Right. You know, I'm watching my great grandkids, right? My, particularly the girls and how easy it is to I all the work that, you know, and talk and, and, and things that we do together, right? That programming gets set up. <laugh>, right? <laugh>, it gets mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it gets so set up. And

so, you know, it, it was in that recognition finally after, you know, going through all the things that I was never gonna find it looking outside of myself, right?

(19:33):

And that is eventually what, what brought me to yoga originally, what brought me to yoga. What really, uh, uh, physically actually factually brought me to yoga was sciatica. Right? I had this sciatic, I had this sciatic pain. And someone suggested, you know, and said, it actually, it was a, a physician, and this was rare. This was in the, the, uh, early nineties. And it was rare that you would hear a physician say something like this, but she said, you know, you don't wanna be a muscle relaxers for the rest of your life. I know this is painful, but that's not a, a sustainable path. And she said, if I were you to find yoga, I'd find a yoga teacher in a yoga class. And that was so rare, right? And I'm so grateful to her to this day. And so I did. And then it started working for the sciatica, and I started noticing a couple other things that were going on as well, right?

(20:36):

There were some things that were shifting internally. There were some things that were shifting in so many ways. And I was like, what is this? Right? And that was when I, I really, really started to get curious about it. So that was kind of the, the, the pathway in. And then I recognized how deeply tied it was to my path of, of recovery from a addiction, particularly then it was, um, drugs and alcohol. And I recognized how, how connected it was with the 12 step program, which was my pathway in. And I started making all these connections and recognizing how this could deeply serve me as an adjunct, as something in addition to the cognitive work that I was doing, that adding this somatic work to, it was it, you know, it was opening up things that, that I had never connected, that I had never seen before. And it was kind of that, that, that led me in. And then, you know, back to what we were talking about earlier, I started thinking I knew some shit, right? <laugh>, <laugh>.

(21:56):

You know, I got this yoga thing. I'd done all this research and done all this stuff and ended up relapsing, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And then so I relapsed twice, and it was after that second relapse, I recognized that I still had things in separate boxes. And that what was needed was that, that really, there were no separate boxes mm-hmm. <affirmative>, right? That it's all really the same thing. And I had to make those connections before it turned into something that really supported, right. The sustainable growth. And since then, you know, it's, it's catapulted recovery and life and all of those. And not that there's, you know, not sorrow and pain and all of that, but it's given me a new container to hold all of that stuff. And, and, and I'm just blown away. It's catapulted my recovery in a way that I didn't even know was possible.

Michelle (23:00):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And your, I'm thinking about dharma and your work in the world, which of course isn't just one thing, but like how sometimes we might experience something and not know what's gonna lead us to this path that's really about what we're supposed to do. Alignment and our dharma. So exactly. Thinking about what you created, you know, and, and your program and how many people have, would probably say by 12 Sr. How that has saved their lives. I'm sure people say that to you and to the people who lead that programming and how it's catapulted their recovery. So you prioritizing your own recovery, of course, course is, is significant and important. And you also shared the path of yoga with the world so that others could recover. Like that's how, and have been doing that work for a long time.

Nikki ([23:56](#)):

Yeah. I love how you just said that. It is very true. I can't be anything. Well, you know, I definitely don't suggest that anybody really consciously take the path that I took cuz it was a, a difficult and challenging path, right? And, and there's the and. I can't be anything but grateful for it today, right? It's that it's like, I know one of the, the sacred texts you loving adore is the Bhagavad Gita. And, and it's that, right? That is prasad, right? Yeah. That is, that is, it's been such prasad, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative> that it's been such a gift from, even though all the things that it looked like, particularly then it's been the gift of my life, right? And how can I not be anything but grateful? How can I not be anything but grateful?

Michelle ([24:57](#)):

And it's just, it feels profound that you've, you've shared that with others. Like, again, I'm not saying everyone needs to do that or be on that path, I just think it, it just stands out to me how you have been on your path and, and worked on healing, right? And then shared that. And when we're able to do that, just what can come from that I think is what I'm so struck by.

Nikki ([25:21](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I'm just so grateful that, you know, it just allows, continues as you know, I work day by day by day, cuz it is a one day at a time thing, right? Yeah. It really, it really, you know, I do my practice, I do that work <laugh> so that hopefully there can be this, this economist mind to hold all the shit right that's going on, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative> all the shit so that I don't wanna run and use something outside of myself, our culture, um, particularly, you know, talk about this in the work we, we collapse or conflate relief and resolve Right. That those things get really conflated. Right. And that I think I wanna run out. In fact, I mean, I mean, even in the bigger world and in the bigger work, we conflate relief with resolve, you know, it's talking to this about someone even like, you think about George Floyd's murder, right? We got a little relief and we think that that's the resolve. We stop working and we <laugh>. Right? And, and, and that's part of that whole process. And we do the, the same thing. I get a little relief and I confuse that with resolve, and then I'm right back in the same circle over and over and over and over again. Right. And, you know, I've just come to, to recognize that that's not skillful <laugh>.

Michelle ([27:07](#)):

Right? Yeah. It's, you know, the way you were talking about it and what you said about George Floyd, and I don't know if this is the conversation you were having when you, when you were talking about George Floyd, um, to someone else, but I really appreciate the way you're talking about relief and resolve, because you are absolutely right. People confuse those things. And so like people wake, they, they woke up and all of a sudden we're like, oh, wait, what's happening in the world? And now where are people? We have the same problems we had. Right? And that's the macro scale. And of course, humans, myself included, do this all the time too as individuals in our lives, right? We, we suffer in part because we confuse those two things. And it makes me think about practice again and how it can continue to illuminate what what actually needs to heal <laugh>, right? For there to be a resolution if there ever will be one. But, but that we need to be on a path of, of healing for sure. I think it's a really important point, and I, and I wanted to ask you about your practice and what you mentioned, your practice, like what, what your practice looks like. These these days may look the same as it did 10 years ago, I don't know, but I'm curious to know. It

Nikki ([28:21](#)):

Definitely doesn't look the same as it

Michelle ([28:22](#)):

Did. I didn't think so.

Nikki ([28:24](#)):

<laugh>

Michelle ([28:25](#)):

Had a feeling. It

Nikki ([28:26](#)):

Really doesn't look the same as it did 10 years ago. Um, my practice now, one of the, it includes a lot of chanting, right? I'm into to really chanting the, you can't see in this room, but there, uh, a dozen of the murtis that are sitting over <laugh> yo. And I just think that work is brilliant. I love that work, right? That I am really looking at this external thing as a way to remember the qualities of that external thing in me, right. As a way to relate to whatever what's already inside me. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I, I I, I do a lot of chanting a chant a little bit in the morning, a little bit at night, right? A little bit at night. And then I do a lot of, um, mostly it's, it's pranayamacentric Asana, right? So my asana definitely doesn't look like it did 10 years ago.

([29:35](#)):

Right. And it, and it depends on how it shows up. It's, uh, uh, it depends on what's going on in my life and in my world. It may be that piece may be, you know, 15 minutes or 20 minutes or whatever I got right in, in, in that moment. And then when I have it, it's different and longer and, and all of that. But it always includes a little bit of movement, right? Just to something I got this one little, little thing that I use all day long, right? And, and, and I call it ftn and it just means find the middle, right? <laugh>, and that's what it is. And I use it all day long, especially when I start to notice that, that I'm off middle, right. I'm, I've gone one side or, or or the other. Right. You know, even little things like, uh, the, about three weeks ago, I went out to my mailbox and I saw a letter from the I r s and I could feel myself just gulp and freeze and tents and all of that.

([30:42](#)):

And then, you know, I use this little thing, find the middle, right? Right. Just, just stop and find the middle and soften the grip and come back to your breath. Right? And it takes about 30 seconds or less to do that. And then when I do that, I can approach whatever it is with a different frame and in a different mindset and that, so I use, now I call these little yoga snacks or yoga tools, right. <laugh>, when I start to notice something's off. And, and then, and, and the beauty of it is that the, the practice over the years has given me a, a much deeper level of sensitivity to when something's off <laugh> to win some, when I'm just regulated, when, when something's off. And so I use those little beautiful practices with throughout the day, and those have served, those are serving me really, really, really well. And, and then, you know, a lot of meditation, right? I love, I love, love, love meditation. And so using the morning, it's a little bit of asana, a little bit of ProAm and a little bit of meditation, right? And that whole thing could take 30 minutes or less. Right? And, and, um, I, I really appre and when, when I have more time and when there's less things pulling and all of that in my life, then it's more, yeah. What usually mo for the most part always happens is the chanting, right? <laugh>.

Michelle ([32:24](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. What do you feel like it is? I have two harmoniums behind me, <laugh>, and they're next to my altar. And I love chanting as well. And the vibration and the, in particular the sound of the harmonium and the sensation of it, like the breath feels like I'm making something breathe or inviting it to breathe. I was just, I'm curious to know what about chant? Like what for you about chanting?

Nikki ([32:52](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

Michelle ([32:53](#)):

What is it? Right? Because you always do that, it sounds like. It's like that's the Yeah. You're going to always do that.

Nikki ([32:59](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I know. You know, even from a neurobiology perspective, that all that goes to a different, it bypasses shit right. And goes to a different whole level of the brain and, and the being, I mean, it just bypasses stuff. And I love that. Right? I love that, that it bypasses the part of my thinking. I, a friend of mine whose mother had had, um, a really, really serious stroke, right? Couldn't speak words, but she could sing Right. Saying the songs and the loves of her life, the words were perfect and she couldn't speak Right. <laugh>. And so <laugh>

Michelle ([33:48](#)):

Yeah.

Nikki ([33:49](#)):

So I knew right, that it has to approach something completely different in, in the brain. And so that always, and then what I'm chanting, right, has such deep, is so old and has such deep resonance and such deep meaning, right? That, that, um, that it just seems, you know, that there's superpower in that <laugh> in that practice. It just seems to me that there's superpower in that practice.

Michelle ([34:24](#)):

<laugh> Yeah. As you're describing it, and I'm thinking about it, my own practice of, of chanting thinking about, uh, transmutation, like how it can, well transportation, a transport, a port se, but also it's like a fast track to Yes. The bypassing you were talking about. It's like you can transmute, um, because it also feels connected to the, a different realm for me. Like I'm still on earth, but it's, it's like spirit. It's, there's something else happening. It's very evident Yeah. Through the sounds, which I know is intentional, right. Through the sounds and the tones and the, yeah. So I hear that the ability it has to sort of bypass and that you're operating from some other space, right? Yes. You can't intellectualize chanting, that's not what's actually happening. I mean, pronunciation, but beyond that, that's not what's happening. It's more

Nikki ([35:14](#)):

That's right. That's right. And I don't know if that I could ever describe what was in, in words. Right. I always love it. There was, uh, I read this a long, long time ago. It was Jay Krishna Murdi who said, the reason for thoughts and words are to transcend thoughts and words, <laugh>, right. And so <laugh>.

Michelle ([35:36](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> <affirmative>. It's real

Nikki ([35:39](#)):

<laugh>.

Michelle ([35:41](#)):

Yeah, I hear that. I hear that my friend who, you know, Vivette Jeffries Logan, she says it often she'll say there are no words and it means so many different things. Like in many different contexts, she'll say it. And I love it when she says it cuz it's like, no words can describe what is actually happening right here. Right. And in, in real time in this moment. And that it can be applied to so many different things. And that transcendence you just named mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, for sure.

Nikki ([36:11](#)):

I love it. I

Michelle ([36:12](#)):

Love it. Yeah. I am. I know earlier you mentioned children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and I imagine they all have different personalities. But I'm gonna ask a question that's like more about generalizing wisdom. And because you, like, you've been on a path, you have a deep practice, you described some of what you've moved through in your life are moving through. And I, I wanna know like what wisdom do you want to impart to your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. And it can be like a one pearl of wisdom. I, I know you're already doing it, but I like wanna hear what it would be like. What would you say based on your lived experience?

Nikki ([36:59](#)):

Wow. What a beautiful, beautiful question. And I do think about that, uh, you know, a lot, and I'm not sure I'm, I'm not sure it shows up in words, right? Again, that's that whole idea,

Michelle ([37:16](#)):

Right. It might be image something else,

Nikki ([37:18](#)):

Right? I'm not sure it shows up in words, but particularly the younger now. So I got this range of, of great-grandchildren. The ones that who I'm all in with right now, the great-grandchildren mm-hmm. <affirmative>, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren love and adore me, right? <laugh>. And it's so, it's so beautiful. Um, and what it is is, and and you're right, they all have different aspects. They all came in with these different aspects of, of who it is that they are. They all came in with these different personalities and Vasanas and samskaras and Right. And they came in with a, a lot of that stuff. However,

when we get together, right? It, it's like when I'm in the presence of the four year old, that I'm right in the presence and with the four year old <laugh> Right. And I turn into a four year old and we do little silly things like a four year old <laugh> and, and, and, and all of that.

(38:34):

And I, I just love it. They turn, I'm turned into, um, another aspect, another one of those aspects of something that's inside of me. And, and I love it. And they love it. And it's, it's that, right? Um, more and more and more learning how to be present with what's in front of me rather than my idea of what that is. Right? I've, I've always been, uh, more, um, in relationship with an image rather than being in relationship with what's really in front of me. And I would be in a relationship with my gr great-grandchildren, like who I thought a great-grandmother should be, rather than being in relationship with my great-grandchild that's in front of me. I would ra I would be in a, in, uh, a relationship with an image of what I thought great-grandmother should look like, or what I've been programmed into what grandmother should look like or what mother should look like.

(39:43):

This was the, you know, so I've been married four times, <laugh>, <laugh>, and I, when I, when I start to recognize, you know, some of the things that, that were part of it that ended in a break in relationship, it was because I was so busy in relationship with who I thought I should be rather than being in relationship with the person that's in front of me. Right. And I'm learning, I learned so much from, from all of that, right. That instead of being in relationship with an image, being in relationship with what's here, right. With what's really in front of you. And if there's anything that I could offer to my great-grandchildren, that's it. Right. Being in, in relationship with life and being a part of life rather than being in relationship to my image of life mm-hmm. <affirmative> or what I think <laugh>.

Michelle (40:46):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. I think that's such powerful medicine for us all. I know I asked about it related to your family because there's so much conditioning that moves us away from the present moment or moves us away from who we are. And, and they're, we're incentivized to move away from who we are and to be distracted, like not be present. So it sounds simple, but I think it's so profound to think about being present with what is or who is around you, and also what you named about what shows up for you. So you're playing with your four year old great-grandchild, and then that part of you comes out too. It's like then you're mirroring that, that's a reflection of who you are as well. And that gets to come out because you're, you're present or practicing presence in that, in that moment. And so what is possible, like what could happen, you know, if we were, if we slowed down enough and were present or in the practice of that at least because I think it is a practice, right. And then could see what will come up, what what aspect or characteristic.

Nikki (41:53):

That's right. And I know you know that, right? Uh, this is the same thing happens when I'm with my dog mm-hmm. <affirmative>, right? When Ella, my, the Ella Fitzgerald's, my dog <laugh>.

Michelle (42:06):

I love that elephant

Nikki (42:07):

Gerald. And when I'm in there with Ella, right. It, it's just, it just is natural. I am just with Ella and we just play and we just do the things that, that me and Ella do, and we just relate in a way that has nothing to do with an idea or an image or, you know, or any of the, those kinds of things. And, and I'm, I'm, I learned so much from that <laugh>

Michelle ([42:37](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> Yeah. That we can be and be who we are instead of striving to be something we're not. Yeah. Like, that's not true to, to us. Yeah. I, I'm curious to know how, like I asked about practice and the path, and of course you've shared some about your life and, and we've been through a time like a, I don't know what that even means, but a lot has gone on over the last few years mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I am curious to know how, because I know you're like committed to your practice and to us as a collective, like how have you weathered this? Like the, I I'm curious to know how your heart is, how you've weathered this, what you understand, any part of that that you, that you wanna answer?

Nikki ([43:32](#)):

Oh, <laugh>. Wow. I have felt really, you know, and still feel is still there, this liminal space

Michelle ([43:45](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Nikki ([43:46](#)):

You know, and in, in many aspects of, of the recognition of this liminal space, it really has simply been put in one foot in front of the other. There's this, that's a phrase that I learned in 12 steps, right? You put one foot in front of the other and you do the next good Right. Honest thing. Right. You just do the next good Right. Honest thing. And it's been that for what seems like now, I mean, it seems like so long <laugh>, right? It is just putting one foot in front of the other and doing the, the next right. Thing. And, and that has been the thing that's been sustaining me, right? N n n you know, not even thinking that I know the way out of this, you know, I don't Right. <laugh> and what I can do is what is put one foot in front of the other and do the next Right. On a stick. Right. And it is again, going, going back to the [inaudible] Right. That, that, that big question, right. That Arjuna asked, right. Do I engage with this in this moment? Is that one right? Yeah. And it's mo almost moment by moment, I'm still asking myself that same question, right? <laugh> mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Michelle ([45:24](#)):

Yeah. And Krishna's like, um,

Nikki ([45:27](#)):

<laugh>

Michelle ([45:28](#)):

You decide, but also here's the side. That's right.

Nikki ([45:31](#)):

Krishna is Like, it depends. Right, right. You're my favorite answer to everything. It's true. It depends. Right.

Michelle ([45:39](#)):

<laugh>, I do love that

Nikki ([45:41](#)):

<laugh>.

Michelle ([45:42](#)):

Yeah.

Nikki ([45:42](#)):

Right. And it's, it's that, right. And I have to, and I'm in that inquiry

Michelle ([45:47](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Nikki ([45:48](#)):

Almost all the time. Right. <laugh>,

Michelle ([45:54](#)):

I just, I so appreciate when people are like, I don't know the way out of this, you know, I think it's like the, there's freedom in that. There's, I'm telling you <laugh>, there's freedom in that. It's not that we don't have any information, but it's, it is more like That's true. Um, it feels honest. And as we, you know, are in the not knowing, doing what you said, like what does it look like to put one foot in front of the other or take another step that is good and in service of and Right. Like it's Right.

Nikki ([46:30](#)):

And I'm grateful that I've got a, a foundation that guides what the next good right, honest thing is. Right. That's true. True. It's from Dharma, right? We know dharma's what upholds the universe. Yeah. It's the love, it's the, it's all those things that uphold the universe. And that doesn't mean it's sunshine and lollipops. We know that. Right. Uh, but as my action is based in dharma and what upholds the universe. I got some guidance on what the next good right, honest thing is. Right. That helps me answer the question, what is the next good right. Honest thing for me to do. Right. And sometimes it is like, like <inaudible> not to engage. Sometimes it is Right. Not to engage. Right. And, and, and to be, to know that that's the next good Right. Honest thing, <laugh> mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And we're a culture that, you know, do, do, we could, you know, we do, do do, do do. Right. Right. And sometimes the answer is do stop.

Michelle ([47:44](#)):

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Stop and stop. Wait, pause. Breathe. Right. Watch, listen. Yeah. All of that. I love it. Skid medicine for us. Well, is there anything else you'd wanna, you wanna share with folks listening about what's present for you at this time? Anything else?

Nikki ([48:05](#)):

I, I wanna tell you, I haven't even told you yet. Right. We're, we're gonna do another race in America.

Michelle ([48:12](#)):

Oh, right. And that, that will be in 2023.

Nikki ([48:16](#)):

Three. Right. And we're doing Race in America, new Orleans.

Michelle ([48:21](#)):

Wow.

Nikki ([48:22](#)):

Wow. No shit. Wow. I am so excited about it. Right. You know, the, the, the intricacies and complexities and the interweaving and so, and we're just in the process. We got some, some really, really, you know, the depth of, of that more Yes. Having been involved in it. And so I think this New Orleans saint is gonna put, it's gonna be November re really a year from now. November.

Michelle ([48:53](#)):

Okay.

Nikki ([48:54](#)):

Yeah. November next year. So, uh, and of course we wanna invite you to be a part of it because you've been a part of all of them. So <laugh>,

Michelle ([49:04](#)):

I would love that. And I said, wow, that way, because whenever I visit new a sadness, whenever I visit New Orleans, there is a, like, there's a sadness in the air. It's palpable to me. It's like, I don't mean it's a sad place, I just mean history. The the grief associated with New Orleans history is, and I think it's palpable everywhere, but there's something more, um, intense about it there for me. And I'm not from, like, I'm not, I just go and visit and teach there. Yeah. And it's palpable. It's

Nikki ([49:36](#)):

Like, it's a depth of that, a depth of that, that is really, really, really profound.

Michelle ([49:44](#)):

Yes.

Nikki ([49:45](#)):

And so there are many things to explore there, and I'm so looking forward to this one.

Michelle ([49:52](#)):

<laugh>. Yes. Yes. It will be so powerful in the healing that can happen to, in that space. So people should definitely look out for race in America when that's when that's announced. And it sounds like it'll be about in a, in a year, November, 2023. So look out for that. It's, if you've done it, do it again. <laugh>. If you haven't done it, look into it and sign up. It is a, it's a really well thought out, transformative experience, not a program. Like, it's, it's an experience and it will change you. So it invite people into that. Well, thank you for spending time with me today. You know, we're recording on the, what today is the 25th. It is the solar eclipse. There was one this morning.

Nikki ([50:38](#)):

That's right.

Michelle ([50:39](#)):

Partial solar eclipse. It's a new moon. And Scorpio, my honeybees have been wild all day,

Nikki ([50:47](#)):

<laugh>.

Michelle ([50:48](#)):

And I feel like they've, they sung me yesterday. They're feeling the eclipse. So, and Anne, I think it's perfect that we had this interview today with the things we talked about and just going deep and the murkiness and the, I don't know. And the, yeah. So thank you Nikki for being a friend and teacher and comrade and for just how much you've gifted us. Like that mean us that all of us, how much you've gifted us. So thank you so much.

Nikki ([51:17](#)):

I'm so grateful. And I can't wait to see you in person. I can't wait to hug.

Michelle ([51:22](#)):

I know, I

Nikki ([51:23](#)):

Know. I can't wait. I can't wait. I can't wait. I'm really looking forward to it. Thank you for so much who you are. And you know, I'm just I like I told you in the text, my heart is so happy at seeing where you in this moment and the, the joy in your eyes, in your heart, in your life. It, it, I'm so happy.

Michelle ([51:52](#)):

Yeah. Thank you so much. Yeah. You've, you've witnessed part of the journey to

Nikki ([51:57](#)):

Yes.

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Michelle ([51:58](#)):

So, you know. Yes. You know, some things. Yeah.

Nikki ([52:01](#)):

<laugh>. Yeah. You know, a lot of things. Awesome, awesome. Yeah. Yeah.

Michelle ([52:06](#)):

Thank you.

Nikki ([52:09](#)):

Well, thank you for having me.

Michelle ([52:11](#)):

Of course.

Nikki ([52:12](#)):

<laugh>,

Michelle ([52:14](#)):

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