

[00:00:06.250] - Wynne Leon

Welcome to the sharing the heart of the matter podcast, where we celebrate the why and how of creativity. I'm Wynne Leon, and in this episode, I'm with my co host, Dr. Vicki Atkinson. We are talking about the art of practicing. We are celebrating our 50th podcast. In this episode, we talked about my favorite quote as it relates to pulling ourselves together to start something and then sticking with it. Here's the quote. Your first podcast will be awful. Your first video will be awful. Your first article will be awful. Your first art will be awful. Your first photo will be awful. But you can't make your 50th without making your first. So get it over with and make it. Vicki calls it the pancake quote. The first one out of the pan is never the best. For me, it's all about celebrating the art of practice, an ode to the process of becoming I wouldn't say that every part has been awful, but there have been many things that have felt awkward. Working up the courage to ask strangers to be guests, listening to our own voices, finding our way to the heart of the matter.

[00:01:31.550] - Wynne Leon

So Vicki and I talk about the discoveries, like the realization that at this age, we aren't coming at this from nothing. We get a boost by bringing our professional and personal knowledge to a new practice and three other things we learned. Be prepared and organized. That approaching a topic with a discussion points and a list of linked resources helps create a solid foundation for a good conversation. Number two, people say yes. We have been so lucky that our esteemed guests have said yes to us and have also seemed to have fun doing podcasts with us. And number three, authenticity and respect will make up for lack of experience. In many ways, this is a great episode for anyone who is surfing the waves of learning something new. Come along with us and celebrate. That practice might not make perfect, speaking for ourselves, of course, but it can be so rewarding as we keep growing. I know you'll love it. Hi, Vicki.

[00:02:57.840] - Vicki Atkinson

Hey Wynne, How are you?

[00:02:59.690] - Wynne Leon

Good. It's the Pancake episode. Are we 50? Did we 50 episodes? Which you make me laugh because you call my quote about this. The pancake episode, as in the first pancake that you do, is never the good one, right? You have to do, right? Yes. The quote that is, you can never get to your 50th unless you get to your first, which really, if you.

[00:03:28.550] - Vicki Atkinson

Think about it, and maybe it's just because we're hungry and we're recording at lunchtime, but maybe if it's a pancake and it's a 50th, it's a golden pancake, which makes me think about, like, butter and syrup, right? Yum.

[00:03:45.370] - Wynne Leon

For anybody that hasn't heard the quote that we're talking about, it is your first podcast will be awful. Your first video will be awful. Your first article will be awful. Your first art will be awful. Your first photo will be awful. But you can't make your 50th without making your first. So get over with it and make it.

[00:04:13.730] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, it's like a little pitchfork on our backsides, right? Goosing us forward even when across these one to 50, well, almost 50 episodes, we've kind of admitted to ourselves and to our listeners that we are, like, maybe making it up as we go along just a little.

[00:04:32.280] - Wynne Leon

Right? But now that we've gotten to this 50th, I think it's a wonderful time to look back at what doing 50 podcasts has meant for us personally, has meant for development, has meant for the art of trying. There's so many things that we've learned.

[00:04:52.310] - Vicki Atkinson

In 50 episodes, and some of it is naivete and just leaning in and doing it anyhow and trying. But I think one of the things that we've gotten feedback from people about is that there was that early detection of genuine affinity, affection between the two of us, and fun, that it's really unusual for us, regardless of what the topic has been, to not have a little positive energy or a little bit of joy in our voices because we truly do enjoy each other.

[00:05:28.410] - Wynne Leon

That's true. And I got to say about all this, and whether we're talking about podcasting or writing, we are champion talkers. So it's not that we were inexperienced at talking when we started this. We just were inexperienced as talking and recording it and packaging it and putting it out there.

[00:05:51.870] - Vicki Atkinson

Well, that's all you, our listeners, should know. I'm in the sidecar. Wynn is driving. She's in command and does all the technical, all the sound editing. I'm good for the giggles sometimes.

[00:06:12.070] - Wynne Leon

And all the insights.

[00:06:15.750] - Vicki Atkinson

Well, we know we've had fun along the way, and we've taken some people on a ride with us, and shockingly, people are still willing to get on board, which is also maybe at number 51 of the biggest revelations, looking back, that people would want to join us.

[00:06:31.550] - Wynne Leon

What you bring out one of my biggest lessons, because I remember when I first started doing this, and maybe we had only had two or three podcasts under our belts, and I wanted to ask somebody to join us. I was really nervous. And what I've learned in asking, not all 50 episodes have been with other people, but we've asked at least three dozen people to join us on this. Everybody has said yes, and that's been one of the best lessons that people say yes. Yeah.

[00:07:06.700] - Vicki Atkinson

And I think we hear that a lot for listeners or people that have friends or family that are in marketing or sales to set yourself up for success. Everything begins with a question, and ask the right question, but have confidence and faith and ask it anyhow. But if you never ask, you already know what the outcome will be. And so whether we were a little naive or just overly hopeful, or people just thought, well, that looks like it could be a sideshow, maybe that'll be fun, and I'll join you. We're not sure what the motivations were, but that in and of itself as a metric or an indicator, has lifted us up and kept us moving. And even if a couple of people said no for good reasons, that would be okay. But I think one of the things that you did early on that really helped us. And when people have asked about the how to, it was never just a blind knock knock to someone to say, do you want to chat? It was always, we admire you, genuine regard for something that you have done or are doing that we have respect for.

[00:08:22.450] - Vicki Atkinson

And then at least a few prompts to give an example of where the discussion might go. Because as we were feeling discomfort or feeling like novices at this, our number one goal throughout was never about making us look good or sound good, even though you did a lot of the back end editing of that. But it was always about guest comfort and trying to get a good experience together for everyone, ultimately for the listeners.

[00:08:52.050] - Wynne Leon

Yeah, and you say a lot in that statement that I want to unpack because I think respect was definitely something that we've genuinely feel for everybody that's been on this show. We've read what they've written before they come on the show. So we've been prepared. Those are definitely things that have led to everybody saying yes to us. But the other thing that you put together at the outset of this was sort of that outline for the discussion prompt so that we had a document to go to with people of these are the topics. These are not necessarily everything that we'll talk about, but here are the topics that we want to

hit. Because really, the question that we're asking people is, how did you do it? Whatever it was, publishing, art, meditation, and that's too big of a question for anybody to answer.

[00:09:54.430] - Vicki Atkinson

It is, and I think for the most part, people have very appropriate egos about what they do. And I think it's one of the things that I've enjoyed most about talking with folks with you is that people, for the most part, haven't been in a mode where they just want to do that self aggrandizing stuff.

[00:10:15.880] - Wynne Leon

Right.

[00:10:16.290] - Vicki Atkinson

There's a humility about I created something or I'm interested in something that really draws us in because we don't want to talk to the experts. We want to talk to the people that are trying and doing. It's the how.

[00:10:33.930] - Wynne Leon

Right. How are you doing it? I think this is how you've put it in the present tense, which is even more tangible, is, how are you doing? How are you doing life? How are you doing creativity? And that has been probably, again, one of the features or the themes that have come through is inspiration. That's what I've gotten out of all the conversations that we've had.

[00:11:06.250] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. And it's that way to connect that you and I found each other blogging and then reading each other's books and then connecting about kind of like mindedness. But it's what we've enjoyed the most about making friends with people that are largely in the virtual world, with a few exceptions, because that ability to connect and not feel isolated or talk about shared goals or wanting to do the best that we can with what we have in front of us, but still find a way to create or, like you said, be inspired or to innovate and to use our one blessed life to the fullest extent possible.

[00:11:49.520] - Wynne Leon

To the fullest extent possible. Something you just said there sparked something for me, which is, you've said the worst thing in life is being disconnected. And that is one of the things that I think this podcast has done is to bring to life people's voices. Really powerful. You had a comment on your. We're doing this on a Friday, and you did a post about a podcast, and you had a comment from Deb Ferriss. Yes. I look forward to hearing the sound of your voice as I've heard it through your written words. And that's such a

really great comment because she's talking about what we've loved hearing, both in each other and in the people that we've had on, is the voices that convey warmth.

[00:12:49.670] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. And I think that's the thing that people that are interested in writing that writer's heart, we want to be seen, we want to be heard. We want to be valued. We want to be, I think, to the greatest extent for folks that are writing personal stories and largely nonfiction, want to be seen based on what we're expressing. And I think even some of our writer friends that are writing fiction, people want to be seen for their artistry, their creative imaginations. It's amazing being around people that have the ability to do that. But what Deb did was such a full circle for me. But we see this happen again and again in the community that we've helped to create, which is a pretty bold statement. But you'll have to share about how many listens we've had, because that really was kind of stunning for us. But when someone offers a comment like that and they say, like Deb did, I've read you, now I get to listen to you. That creates the knowing. That's what we want. I want to be known. I want to know you. But hearing voices, it really matters.

[00:14:04.830] - Wynne Leon

Yeah, it really does.

[00:14:11.150] - Vicki Atkinson

Even when you and I talk over each other, or when we have our little verbal ticks, where I go or we do right, and I go right. So we have all of our little foibles that come out, but we hope they're endearing.

[00:14:28.790] - Wynne Leon

Yeah, well, and that's sort of the embarrassing side of this or the exposure and vulnerability side of doing the podcast, doing what we've done with writing is that it does expose us and our humanness to the wider world. Yeah.

[00:14:51.360] - Vicki Atkinson

And it's one thing when it's banter like, you and I are feeling pretty, like, light and breezy on a Friday recording this, the bulk of the week has passed. We're heading into Friday afternoon. We're feeling a little light. But there are times when you and I have recorded podcasts and the topics have been much more serious about healing, recovery, forgiveness, grief, loss. And our voices have quaked, the tears have rolled. You and I process before, during and after. Was it enough? Was it too little? Did we hit the right note? Will we scare people? Do we sound stupid? All of that still runs with us as we're doing what we're doing right now. But I think the glorious thing about having a partner is we've got the person that will, I think, be honest, I think we are with one another about how we're doing. How does it read, how does it sound? And I think that's helped so much. If I were by myself doing this, I probably would have hung up my toe shoes at number ten when they made it to 50. That's true.

[00:16:02.450] - Wynne Leon

Something you just said sparked the thought that even after 50 episodes, you and I will remark to each other, oh, I think I rambled. Or did I go on too long about that? We still have that sense of vulnerability when we share our stories and like, oh, my God, was that too much?

[00:16:26.010] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. And yet we're trying to find that fulcrum, that balancing point, because we know part of doing this is offering content from the heart, and you can't just do that by being the question asker all the time. Eventually, you have to be the one to say, okay, this might be hard. I'm going to take a deep breath and I'm going to answer the hard question, or I'm going to talk about something that I wrote about that was so much safer when I was writing about it. But now people have read it, it's been a conversation, and I think that it's much more difficult. But we realize we can't always be the ones just saying, oh, hey, and can't always be the one driving. We have to be responders.

[00:17:09.770] - Wynne Leon

So, out of looking at our podcast, one that stands out for me on this particular subject is when my eight year old daughter, Miss O, came on. Because she didn't have any of that self consciousness. She didn't have any of that self consciousness before, and she didn't have any of that self consciousness after. She didn't even really care to listen to her episode. She just came on, she recorded it, and she was done. And that, for me, spoke to the fact that much of the voice in our heads is manufactured, and there's that pureness of being a child where you're like, yes, I did a podcast, and then you move on and you don't worry about it.

[00:17:57.670] - Vicki Atkinson

Well, it was so much fun to spend time with Miss O because even when we were doing it, you're right on with your observations about it. She was in the moment doing it, and there were a couple, like, little flubs and mix ups, and you had to remind her a couple of times to kind of speak slowly, speak into the mic where her head was positioned, phased her not for a millisecond. She took it in stride and just kept on going. But I think that's a really good reminder, too, that we are in such a content driven culture right now that when we're doing something, we attach ourselves to it. The older I get, the more I feel that happens. But really, it's in and out and done and over and on to the next, literally. And so I think we could learn from the children that you dare not fixate, because there's something else you need to do. Don't waste your time fixating. Move on.

[00:18:53.920] - Wynne Leon

Right?

[00:18:54.640] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

[00:18:54.970] - Wynne Leon

And learn is the key word that you included in that response that I think is so good, which is we have tried to learn through this process what we've done. Reminds me of a story that I heard about the tennis player Serena Williams, who oftentimes would show up at the major tennis tournament, the US Open, the Australian Open. There'd be two week long tournaments, and she would show up, and she would basically play her way into fitness through that. She was such a good tennis player that she might show up a little out of shape, but she could play herself. Amazing. And I'm not comparing myself to a champion tennis player, except for the fact is we sort of started this maybe a little bit on the not ready side, but we learned our way through it.

[00:19:54.910] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. And I think still learning. But that question that you raise often about readiness versus waiting, and the older we get, the more waiting is almost like a negligent thing to do, to let time go by. But I also love the bravado. So maybe we're not Serena Williams, but to show up somewhere publicly.

[00:20:20.440] - Wynne Leon

Right.

[00:20:20.790] - Vicki Atkinson

She wasn't doing this in isolation and be, to your point, less than fit for the task, but she did it anyhow, also shuts down like the peanut gallery. She must have enough within her to just go, it doesn't matter what people are saying or thinking. I'm going to run my race and do my thing and prep, which is also, I think, a beautiful reminder in that example that people will be watching and looking, but at a certain point, they just don't matter. They don't.

[00:20:54.290] - Wynne Leon

Right. And the readiness is the question. If you wait until you're ready, you'll be waiting for the rest of your life. Because we're never ready. And the question might not be so much what other people say, but it's what that voice in our head says that's far more self critical than what I've heard from other people.

[00:21:18.890] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, because it haunts us. It hangs out at 03:00 a.m. An endless loop. Right. And you can't escape it.

[00:21:26.760] - Wynne Leon

Right. Why isn't it sleeping at 03:00 a.m.

[00:21:30.110] - Vicki Atkinson

I don't know. Yeah. Listeners, if you can help us figure that out, what is it about 03:00 a.m.? Conundrums. Yeah.

[00:21:39.870] - Wynne Leon

My inner critic, she seems to be an insomniac. I don't know.

[00:21:46.370] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, but it's like taunting. Taunting us. Right. But I'd rather try and do and maybe look silly, look a little foolish, but hope that people see good intent, which is the other thing that I get from you very often, that we have to try because we're not trying to hurt anyone. Quite the opposite. Trying to share what we know and hopefully inspire or give a giggle, but do something to add value where we can. Because there's so many takeaways every day. So many.

[00:22:20.640] - Wynne Leon

So many. Right. And our goal here is to shine light on other people, to shine light on creativity. It's to shine light on people who are willing to come on and have the exposure and brave the exposure and have the vulnerability.

[00:22:39.490] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. And so I think, to your point about the fearlessness aspect, it's not that we're fearless. Maybe it's sometimes a little bit clueless, but definitely impatient, because there's plenty to do and we want to do it.

[00:22:57.930] - Wynne Leon

Oh, yeah. You and I both suffer from impatience.

[00:23:05.450] - Vicki Atkinson

I got a good giggle. Oh, my gosh. It's so true. You said this just a little while ago when and I were having listeners this great conversation, that ideas were just popping. It was like popcorn. And because we both do that, I think we're really good at calling a truce and saying, okay, we need to kind of stop that, to allow things to percolate, marinate, get pushed to the side. Because the truth is we can't do everything we want to do all at once, which is also an important point about prioritizing and picking and choosing. And it's also

why we're very grateful that people would take the time to listen and pay attention to what we're doing, because time is really valuable.

[00:23:54.490] - Wynne Leon

Really valuable. Yes. And that is another theme of these 50 episodes. Not only the inspiration that we've received from everybody that's been willing to come on and the conversations and the real conversations we've been willing to have, but also the gratitude that we've had for the almost 1800 listens that we've gotten.

[00:24:22.770] - Vicki Atkinson

I'm still stunned by that number. Just stunned.

[00:24:29.150] - Wynne Leon

Right. We've been learning our way through this and people have been willing to join us. My takeaway from that is, as it goes back to that readiness thing, if you're willing to try, other people are willing to give you the grace and are interested in coming along.

[00:24:50.670] - Vicki Atkinson

And I think we've had some really nice feedback from people who have given us really lovely praise for how organized we are or just what the approach is, which is really nice. But I think one of the things that we've done maybe to engender that, is that we've been quick to say we're figuring it out. We're not experts, we're not pros. And you and I talked about this.

[00:25:17.530] - Wynne Leon

A little while ago.

[00:25:18.460] - Vicki Atkinson

That vulnerability is a thread that really ties everything we're doing together, because it does feel some days like dancing on the head of a pin. We're balancing other things in our world, and yet this matters. But it does feel like exposure. It does. We're pretty darn transparent with people about stuff. Yeah.

[00:25:41.950] - Wynne Leon

And I think what you just said there about being organized is such a great example of how we've brought our professional lives and all the things that we have practiced for all of our years to bear on a new venture is we're not starting out as newbies in our careers. We've both had long careers in business and in education, in your case. So we've brought those talents. And to me, that speaks to both for our

audience and for ourselves. When we start a new creative venture, whether it be writing or podcasting or doing art of any type, we're bringing all that other experience into it. And we aren't just fresh out of the package. We have all this other thing to bring, and that should help us feel more ready.

[00:26:43.090] - Vicki Atkinson

And I think it's also an example at our ages that we're looking at that dimensionality of life and lifelong learning and looking at the different facets of ourselves. And it's one thing to be accomplished in certain areas, and we feel good about that. And goodness knows you've achieved plenty, my mountain climbing friend. And people sometimes will give me, like, praise or a nod because of my credentials and degrees. But underneath all of that, there is still that aspirational urge to do something more. And really, when you and I boil it down, the thing that brings us together, and it's the tie that binds, is the desire to tell stories and create, right? And we keep rolling back, but it's those two things, and celebrating storytellers and creative people, because we admire it. It's like the most human of human things, right?

[00:27:41.810] - Wynne Leon

And it's the way we transmit our experience from one person to another. It goes back to what you said at the beginning, seeing and being seen.

[00:27:52.950] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. And in the end, I don't think there's anything more precious. There just isn't. We have lots of encounters with people, sometimes every day. And they're superficial, maybe, but I've had some experiences recently being around people that have been in my life for decades. But maybe there was a gap or a time period where there just wasn't as much of a connection. And I had this experience with a friend the other morning having coffee. And we sort of, for several different reasons, none malice related, disconnected, for about five years. But being with someone who really knows you, there was no interruption of time whatsoever. We laughed about silly things as if they happened yesterday, but they were 30 years ago.

[00:28:47.050] - Wynne Leon

Yeah, right.

[00:28:50.230] - Vicki Atkinson

It's good to have that in your life. And I think it's hard. I think that one of the worst things is loneliness and not feeling that you have people around you that see you for who you are, value you, even when you're incomplete or feeling the heaviness that life deals us. All the pain happens.

[00:29:12.340] - Wynne Leon

It does happen. And that's maybe to wrap up what 50 episodes means to me. It's the inspiration, it's the gratitude, but it's also the warmth. The warmth of talking to you, the warmth that I feel. You were just talking about this conversation you had with a friend. The warmth that I feel in every conversation that we share. I've loved it. I've loved getting on and having these conversations, and I've never met in person, but who would know that? Because, crazy, I feel that warmth and I feel that connection. And I think even I would say with all of our guests we've had, that. It's been so much fun to connect and shine the light on creativity and what people have done, how they do it, and try to pass that on. And I hope that everybody who listens to this feels that hug that we're sending out.

[00:30:12.580] - Vicki Atkinson

Oh, my gosh, what a great way to end. And I would only add, if we had to have a manifesto, maybe it is trying to send the best version of a hug that we can, because it's heartfelt and it's real. But I also think that we want to make sure that we're relevant and that as we do, that it's a heartfelt sharing that we're bringing content that is of interest. I think you and I are also looking at wrapping up number 50 here today. Now, we both want pancakes. Thank you very much. But I think a year from now, when we're looking at 100 and where we're at, I think we'll want to look back and know that for the people that have given us their time, that we've been good stewards of time, and we've tried to create content that was of value. So I think we're very open to hearing from listeners about what questions do they have. I think we've been very responsive about that, but super open to it because left to our own devices, we have no intentions of stopping. We'll keep doing what we're doing, but we do take requests, if reasonable yes.

[00:31:29.850] - Wynne Leon

Well said. Yay.

[00:31:32.560] - Vicki Atkinson

Happy anniversary.

[00:31:35.130] - Wynne Leon

Happy pancake episode.

[00:31:37.070] - Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

[00:31:37.710] - Wynne Leon

Woohoo.

[00:31:41.850] - Vicki Atkinson

You.

[00:31:43.570] - Wynne Leon

Thank you for listening. Our music is composed for sharing the heart of the matter by the exquisitely talented duo of Jack Canfora and Rob Koenig. For show notes and more great inspiration, please visit our site at sharingthehartothematter.com.