



EUDAEMONIA **Prosperity, with Shannon Hayes**

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Kim Forrester 0:00

We all understand what it takes to be rich, affluent, well off. But how can we go beyond financial abundance and also enhance our emotional, social, and spiritual wealth? You're listening to the Eudaemonia podcast. I'm Kim Forrester, and today we're going to explore the vital importance of prosperity.

Intro 0:27

Welcome to Eudaemonia, the podcast that is all about flourishing. Plug in, relax and get ready for the goodness as we explore the traits and practices that can help you thrive in life ... with your host Kim Forrester.

Kim Forrester 0:47

Shannon Hayes is the chef and CEO of Sap Bush Hollow Farm located in New York State, USA. Since 2001, Shannon has been a sustainable farmer, entrepreneur, author, and cafe owner, putting together a unique life that has enabled her family to live almost completely free of the conventional economy. She holds a PhD in sustainable farming and community development, and is the author of several popular books, including her latest title, Redefining Rich. It's my absolute pleasure to be chatting with Shannon, today, to explore what it really means to prosper in life and to learn how we can each make better choices to invite true wealth into our lives, and our world. Shannon Hayes, welcome to the Eudaemonia podcast, it's just a delight to have you along.

Shannon Hayes 1:43

Well, thank you so much for having me.

Kim Forrester 1:45

This topic, in particular, I find incredibly fascinating. Every topic that I discuss on the Eudaemonia podcast has social implications. When we're happier people, studies have shown that our friends are happier people. When we are kind people, we live in a kinder environment. But I think there are a few topics where the personal and the social are as integrated as prosperity. For us truly to prosper as individuals, we really need to pay attention to the choices that we're making and the societies that we are creating around us as well. So I'm really excited to have you here for this discussion.

Shannon Hayes 2:27

I love that you're thinking that way because, a lot of times, we tend to be passive and wonder about what our governments are going to do for us and what - you know - what other organisations are

going to do for us. And it really is up to us as individuals to create that more vibrant society. So I'm really excited to have this conversation.

Kim Forrester 2:46

Let's start here, because I'm a New Zealander, and New Zealand is one of the countries that is constantly topping the global prosperity index, along with the Nordic countries and Switzerland. These economies are tiny, and these populations are tiny, compared to, you know, the grand superpowers of the world and yet they seem to be constantly proving themselves to be prosperous nations. It's obvious that economic wealth and prosperity are two completely different concepts. I think we've conflated them somehow, Shannon. How do you define prosperity and what do you believe we most need to understand about true wealth?

Shannon Hayes 3:34

Well, one of the things that that you touched on - New Zealand and a lot of these Nordic countries are really showing that it doesn't matter how big your economy is, what matters is the well being of all. So I'm very concerned about that issue, particularly as an entrepreneur. But more than that, what I've learned, and looking toward my own prosperity and the prosperity of my community, I have to redefine what wealth is. And very often, particularly when we're looking at GDP here in the US, we measure it all in dollars. And that just tells us so little about how wealthy we truly are. When I recognised in my own business that, if I kept looking at the dollar numbers, I was always going to feel poor. And I started reflecting one afternoon about what I felt I was doing as a farmer, and I saw myself as a steward of the land - protecting these old stone walls, protecting these pastures, protecting the watersheds, giving my community food. And I saw myself in service in all of these different ways. And I started to recognise my wealth starts with enjoying what I have here; the good food, the pure water, the clean air, the pastures where I can roam. And then I started recognising that that also can spread to time. Then I just started getting this more expansive view of what my wealth is. My husband and I took going out in the woods and by waterfalls - we have a whole bunch of different spots - every single day for our morning coffee. We go for a hike, we take the coffee with us, and we sit someplace else for a couple of hours, and we shut out the world. Because we started recognising, that's our wealth. Our relationship, where we love each other, is our wealth. Happy kids is part of the wealth. Getting to be with my family, three generations, every single day is part of my wealth. Being in a business where, daily, I'm transacting with my neighbours, and I'm finding out who's doing well who needs help, that is all part of the wealth. These dollars that we talk about are such a tiny, tiny part of the wealth portfolio. They do matter. They do help move resources and such, and they do stand in pretty well when a nice old barter does not work. So it does have a function. But it is not as large as our GDP wants us to believe.

Kim Forrester 6:09

There is also a prevailing mindset that I see out there that, in order for us to prosper as individuals, we must compete, Shannon. We must compete for our wants, and our needs, and our necessities, and our desires. And others have to lose, if I want to win, right? What are your thoughts on that particular mindset? Is it truly possible for us to prosper without inequality and competition?

Shannon Hayes 6:39

You know, I have other businesses like mine around here, and do I sometimes want to see that I'm doing better? Or do I sometimes go, "Oh, they're doing better than me"? I mean, I think we all fall for that at some point. What I've also recognised, however, is that there's a point where it serves us; where competition inspires us to do better, or inspires us to find new ideas and new ways. Then that's helpful. But the minute competition turns us against our fellow businesses, or our neighbours, then that's just toxic, and it's a waste of time. So a little bit of competition - "Oh, wow, they did a really good post. Darn it, I wish I'd come up with that. Why don't we see if I can top them with something a little bit more interesting." - that's great. But the real truth is, if the businesses I'm competing with go out of business, then this area starts to suffer. So I need them there. If other farms go out of business, then the service companies that support farms go out of business as well. So I really need them there. So that's part of the spiritual practice of being an entrepreneur, I think. You can really waste a lot of energy worrying about what the other person is doing. You can also gain energy if you engage in limited quantities, but not too much. So I'm not a big fan of competition. I think it is toxic. But I do realise that sometimes I can grow if I participate a tiny bit in that, and I need to grow because that's what makes this fun.

Kim Forrester 8:22

That's awesome. Shannon, for many of us the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our perspectives and our priorities. Those of us who were paying attention, I think, have made real changes in the way that we walk through the world. If you could pinpoint two or three 'prosperity practices' that have sort of emerged out of the pandemic, and that you'd love to see continue into the future, what would they be?

Shannon Hayes 8:49

I loved seeing how many people returned to family. I loved seeing grown people move back home with their parents. And we we talked about it in the news like it was tragic. But how great for the elders and how great for the middle generations and how great for the younger generations to be together. I think of the families that I saw, who were coming to get food at that time. I saw more grandparents with light in their eyes because they were living with their grandchildren. The other practice that I saw come out of the pandemic that I hope we hold on to is, I think people started recognising that fresh air, that place to go that's green, that outdoors, it really matters. It's part of our overall health and well being and how our community thrives. So I hope that comes forward. And I also think that people started to recognise just how delicious human contact is. I think we were really forgetting that. And to have that removed from us, and to start to cherish what contacts we could safely have, that's really important. And then, as people are coming out of it, to have somebody step into my cafe - I'm only open one day a week, but I'm there a lot of days so people come in anyhow - I just don't serve them anything and they sit down face to face and talk. And they'll stand up and they'll just say something so sweet like, "That felt so beautiful. That felt so wonderful. I haven't felt that and I realise how much that means to me." I think there's so much to gain from this. I'm so sorry for the suffering but I really hope that all the suffering that has happened is transformative, and that those lives that were lost are going to help us grow to be a much better world.

Kim Forrester 10:55

I love that we're here to talk about prosperity and the moment I ask you for some simple practices that you'd like to see continue, it went straight to connection. Connection with nature. Connection with self. Connection with family - and I want to dive a bit deeper into that particular part of the answer. You personally have been able to create and sustain a life-serving economy because of the help and support of your family; the generations up and the generations down. Now, many of us actually live away from family or, sadly, many of us have family that are simply not supportive, not reliable. Shannon, how can those of us who don't necessarily have that family network available to us, how can we make powerful lifestyle changes without sort of going it alone? Can we go it alone?

Shannon Hayes 11:48

Nobody goes it alone, Kim. Nobody goes it alone. Before you and I started talking today you observed you heard some background noise, and I said, "Oh, that's one of my kids. That's my son." But that's actually biologically not my son that you heard in the background. That is a young man who moved in with us at the start of COVID, who needed family support to move forward with his life in his dreams. We are all working together, and he's helping me on the farm and we're helping him get started in his life, in spite of all that he's faced. And if you follow my podcast, you'll hear me refer to brothers and sisters-in-laws and things like that. And I actually only have one biological brother. Biologically, my family is pretty small. But what I have is this network of people that I call sister, that I call brother, and that have all of the same rights and privileges of any other family member. It's not all genetic. A lot of what I have is non-genetic. They are people who we have just decided, "We are family and that is that." And we are the ones who put that definition on. So I would say when someone says they don't have that, then I would say that's the first part of your quest, is you build that. And you build that by being there, by showing up with your fidelity, with asking for what you need, because we build relationships by needing as much as we do by giving. And that's where the real family connection is.

Kim Forrester 13:31

What you were describing there is, you giving in many ways to many different people, and forming family through that sense of giving. But what have you had to give up, Shannon, in order to prosper? And how does this 'giving up' differ in your view to giving back or reinvesting?

Shannon Hayes 13:53

You're the first person who's ever asked me what I've given up. And I have to tell you what, I've never considered that I gave up anything. I suppose what I don't have is a steady paycheck. I don't have a position. I guess I do now because now I'm at the head of my family's farm, but I never really had title. Titles and paychecks. That's about it. Maybe I gave up fluorescent lighting from an office cubicle. I'm stretching. I know and I'm keenly aware, I thought going through this that I was probably giving up the pension and all the amenities of a conventional job; the steady paycheck, the pension, and the sense of recognition, identity that conventional professions provide. I did give that up. What I have noticed though, I stayed the long game because I really like these woods and fields and stone walls. And I really like being free to walk barefoot wherever I want. And I don't have many professional outfits ... oh, I gave up professional outfits, too. But what I recognised over time, playing the long game, I would say I'm probably ... I think, one time, we sat down and we ran the numbers according to national averages. In terms of overall wealth, I gave up nothing. For a woman my age in the United States, I'm probably in the upper quadrant of wealth, in terms of what has

been built. Just by doing it in terms of building equity in into businesses, and reinvesting in my community, and getting other people to invest and magnify that wealth. I know, in terms of the long game financially, we actually, much to my surprise, have come out very, very well. So far.

Kim Forrester 15:59

I found it was a powerful question, because I imagine there are many people who have the regular paycheck, you know, and sit within the conventional economy that would ask that exact question. But the power I think, is truly in your answer there. I love that you hadn't ever considered that you'd given anything up. And I love that the two things you say are a paycheck and a title. Because those are the two concepts I think people are most afraid of giving up in order to prosper. And yet here you are, with this incredibly prosperous life, living a life of true wealth, and economic abundance you were just saying -

Shannon Hayes 16:37

Yeah, yeah.

Kim Forrester 16:38

- and yet, all you gave up was the chase for a regular paycheck and some silly title that tells you, you know, where you stand in a particular hierarchy.

Shannon Hayes 16:49

You know, you're hitting, Kim, on a very important issue in the book. One of the reasons why I hadn't really thought about giving that up - and I talk about this in depth in the book - is, very early on in the game, I started realising that that was a farce. The title and the paycheck, they're losing games. It started with the day my husband got fired from his job and I realised my first lesson about paychecks was, it's really bad to have all your eggs in one basket. And financially, when we were counting on his salary to pay the mortgage on our cabin, we were at our most vulnerable because that paycheck is only as good as the person above you thinking you deserve it. And when all of your finances are coming from one paycheck, that's just dangerous. But also, after we left the paychecks and I started understanding how tax codes work, here in the US, I discovered that earned income is the most expensive form of income. I don't know how the tax codes work for you but, here in the United States, when you earn your money, all the taxes are taken off the top and then you have to live on what's left. But when you run a business, you earn the money for the business, you pay your expenses, and then you're taxed on what's left after that. But it really does make a very huge economic difference. I talked about two characters in the book - one is Responsible Burt who has his paycheck, and one is Reckless Betty who really wants to invest in building a local food community around her in an urban area. And how is it that Responsible Burt can be bringing in \$100,000 a year, and Reckless Betty can be taking in maybe 12,000 tops, and at the end of the year, that she's got almost twice the nett income as Bert. But that paycheck does end up costing so much money. It's not as profitable as we think it is.

Kim Forrester 18:55

I think there's another obstacle though, Shannon, when it comes to moving towards true wealth and prosperity, and that is hedonic adaptation. At some point, what we have can feel like it's not enough

and we want more. We want more security, we want more property, we want a bigger paycheck. Do you feel that daily gratitude and appreciation play an important role if we really want to prosper in our daily lives?

Shannon Hayes 19:27

I hate to sound mercenary about gratitude and spirituality, but I recognise this in myself. I don't actually pine for the next thing very much. You know, I just love being out in the hills, as you know. But what I recognise is, while I don't pine for the next thing, I do love the next project. I do love the next challenge. And now I'm 47 years old, and I've built a lot of different things, and I've started to recognise that if I keep going on the challenge for the next challenge, I'm going to miss out on the next phase of my life. And that might be appreciating and watching my own children's experiences. It can be enjoying more time with my husband. But I'm also recognising that it's my own spiritual growth, too, that really matters. And so the daily practice of gratitude, of reflection, is so important. I do not want to sound like any kind of religious propagandist but, how much time do I spend in prayer, and reflection? It's probably the number one thing I do in my day. I do it a lot. I am talking with you this morning in place of morning meditation, but I'll probably go and do that as soon as we're done here. I talk a lot in the book about naps. I go for naps, I'm really big into those. But when I go for my nap, it starts with reading poetry. Because for me, poetry opens me up to recognising what's around me; little sentiments, a reflection on what it means to see a certain bird, any kind of thing like that. It just makes me really focus on what's magnificent and that stuff can really make me just high and happy. And then prayer at night, or out in the woods, or in my journals. There's a lot of that, that this life makes room for but also demands.

Kim Forrester 21:46

Shannon, the perspective I can see that you're beautifully inviting us into is that we have the flow of prosperity all backwards. Most of us go through life with a flippant understanding that prosperity begins in the bank account; prosperity begins in the paycheck. And once it is all, you know, fine and dandy on the outside, that sense of prosperity will flow into our heart and we will feel mentally, emotionally, spiritually well and flourishing. What you just described there is the complete reverse the flow. As you describe it, prosperity begins in your spiritual self. It begins with you and the connection that you have with the planet, and with people, and with something greater than yourself. And when you find prosperity within, so much of what is external to you either no longer matters or flows in prosperous ways. Would you agree with that?

Shannon Hayes 22:50

Yeah, I think you should write the book. That's good. Yes, absolutely. What I started to recognise was, I want the ability to be with my family, I want the ability to know that the soil beneath my feet is alive, and I want the freedom to sit whenever I want to sit. And I want to be able to think and push my mind. Well, then you start to recognise there's just not a single item or a paycheck that's going to enable any of that. None of it will enable any of that. Some of it will pay the taxes, but it just gets so much smaller than you realise. And then that other wealth really grows.

Kim Forrester 23:36

Getting off the economic treadmill is not going to be possible for everybody listening to this. And for those who do choose an alternative way - those who do choose to perhaps become an

entrepreneur and take more time to sit - they are going to find it challenging at points. Correct?. And in your book, you are very clear that you struggled and you had to put your, you know, nose to the grindstone and you really had to work hard through some challenging moments. What did you tap into, then, in that moment? What was pulling you forward through the challenging times? What made it worthwhile when you were struggling with a business that was in the red?

Shannon Hayes 24:17

I spent a lot of time in that red, let me tell you. Well, I remember there was this one day I was just really stressed. You know, my husband was taken off to the farmers market. I was trying to get the cafe open, and I had like this stack of bills that were on my desk that I didn't have the money to pay, and I was getting the cafe ready to open. I was taking a couple quiches out of the oven and I dropped the quiche on the floor and burned myself. And the burn marks on my wrists literally looked like shackles. And the customers were like, you know, getting ready to come in and I'm on the floor of my kitchen sobbing. And my kids are back there with me, trying to scoop up this quiche, trying to figure out how to salvage something from the day. And then I went from sobbing to absolute laughter. It was pretty maniacal. Like, "Oh my god, does this really blow or what? Just terrible." And I kept looking at those burns. And we shut the cafe at the end of the day - we got through, I don't know how I got through that day - but with this sense of, I'm a victim of my life and I've made the worst set of decisions. And I'm working for the worst possible boss, which is myself. And it was a real low point. And we had no money to go anywhere or do anything. And I was angry. I was really angry, because, oh, my God, everybody else gets paid. The feed guy gets paid, the insurance guy gets paid, the tax guy gets paid. All these people get paid, labour gets paid. But I'm the one doing all the work. I'm the one with my head in a toilet bowl, making sure it's sparkly clean every morning for the guests, for the customers, and I don't get paid. And I was so angry. So we closed the cafe, and I just put a vacation notice up. Gone fishing. And just we disappeared into a mile up the road for 48 hours. We took the kids, we took the tents and the dogs, and we got out of cellphone range. And on that trip, we just made it our goal to explore every swimming hole within a five mile radius. And I just brought some leftover food from the cafe to eat, decided I didn't care. I wasn't gonna do any gourmet feasts. And I sat by this little pond up the road, and I thought, and I thought. And I started to realise, I got into this business because of the problems; because they say that farming and the small scale in the United States is impossible. And I realised that that problem intrigued me. And I opened a cafe in a place that was considered a food desert, a nowhere, a dead town, because I thought it should be there. Because I was fascinated about what would happen if I did it. And I started to recognise that what I was after, was the challenge, the quest, the problems. I'm in it for the problems. And it was this little tiny shift in my thinking. Realising, "Oh, I took this on for the quest. I took this on for the challenge. I took this on for these problems." I get up every morning because these problems fascinate me. And I want to work on them. I don't get up every morning angry because the problem isn't solved. If the problem were solved, I wouldn't have anything to do. I'm in this for the problems, because I care about them.

Kim Forrester 28:16

Let's go a step back though. Before you even realised that - before you had that realisation - here's what I see that you did that I think we can all learn from. When we are overwhelmed by our challenges - whether it's with regards prosperity, or anything else in our lives - when we are overwhelmed and feeling trapped in our lives, or upset or angry, many of us turn to control to try and fix the situation. Many of us tend to control. We try to pull the right lever, or work harder, or push harder against that person there. You didn't turn to control, Shannon. You turned to connection. You took yourself away, you connected with your family and the planet. And I think, of everything you

just said that there stands out to me is the most powerful, beautiful thing that we can understand. That we can do hard things; that when those things are overwhelming, perhaps it's in connection that we will find the solutions. Not in control.

Shannon Hayes 29:17

I do believe that. But I also believe that there's the narrative that we're telling ourselves. We need our stories. And we do have to recognise that the narrative that we're telling ourselves - connecting to our own story - is part of the joy of what we're in this for. And so yes, yes, it's hard. There's no doubt about it. It's really hard. But when you realise. "Oh, yeah, but that's what makes it interesting" and that's what gives you something to talk about with your partner, or your family members at the end of the night. Anything that makes you know, cocktail hour interesting is great. And so then what I started to realise is that these problems are actually, indeed, part of the wealth. To get to work on a problem that I care about, that really matters, is huge. And that gives you the energy to come back and start again.

Kim Forrester 30:05

Your idea of a life-serving economy is very much aligned with a sense of community and connectedness. It just keeps popping up in the narrative here. Are there ways that we can help others to prosper and enhance true wealth in our families, our communities, and our world?

Shannon Hayes 30:24

Always. I think one of the ways that we start, is by recognising the wealth that we have. So I don't have, you know ... I open up my wallet, it doesn't look like there's a lot in there. When I get calls for big donations, cash donations, I don't have that to give. And yet, there are other ways that I'm extremely wealthy, and our family is extremely wealthy. And when I want to build a better world, we tap into the wealth that we have. So we tap in with food, we tap in with the time that we can sit down and share with somebody, the shelter that we can give. And you start people on their lives, on their paths, from your wealth point, if you will. And that's that becomes the joy. Right now, in my life, when I've got businesses running really well, that's where the thrill is for me - is when people can come to me and I figure out, "Okay, I can help in this way. I can help in that way and help that person get going with their dreams."

Kim Forrester 31:30

My final question, Shannon, is one I ask every guest on the Eudaemonia podcast. Can you offer my listeners a morning reminder - so this might be a practice a mantra, or an affirmation - something that can help us all prosper as we begin each day?

Shannon Hayes 31:46

Yeah, I mean, I've talked about this a lot today, but most things that are worth doing seem impossible. It's just a fact. If it's really worth it, it's going to seem impossible. And it gets back to what I was saying earlier - this is about the quest. You may not have a three-generation business with a snap of your fingers. It's about the quest. It's about the journey to get there. I talk in the book about ways we diversify the income so that you can start your journey, but it's ultimately about

starting that journey and taking that adventure. So all I can say is, it's about the quest. It's not about arriving.

Kim Forrester 32:27

Shannon Hayes, your latest book is called *Redefining Rich* and in its chapters, you literally do redefine rich. And you offer some incredible practical tips and tools, and sort of emotional tips and tools as well, to help people find their way off that economic treadmill and into true wealth. If people want to find out more about the book, about you, where can people find out more?

Unknown Speaker 32:52

Come over to www.sapbush.com and, on there, you can actually find links to the podcast, which is the *Hearth of Sap Bush Hollow* podcast, where it's chronicles and lessons from a life tied to family, community, and the land. But also you can learn more about the farm, about our farm-to-table cafe, which is open only Saturdays. All there on that website. I do have an Instagram feed at [@sapbushshannon](https://www.instagram.com/sapbushshannon). And you can find me on Facebook at Shannon Hayes, as well.

Kim Forrester 32:52

Thank you so much, Shannon, for coming onto the *Eudaemonia* podcast and sharing some of your wisdom with me today.

Shannon Hayes 33:28

Thank you, Kim. I had a wonderful time.

Kim Forrester 33:31

As Carolyn Kennedy once remarked, "As much as we need a prosperous economy, we also need a prosperity of kindness and decency." You've been listening to the final episode of Season 10 of the *Eudaemonia* podcast. I'll see you back here in late July with more uplifting interviews. In the meantime, if you'd like to learn more about how to live a truly flourishing life, please subscribe, check out www.eudaemoniapod.com for more inspiring episodes, or come join me on Instagram, [@iamkimforrester](https://www.instagram.com/iamkimforrester). I'm Kim Forrester. Until next time, be well, be kind to yourself, and make prosperity a priority.