



EUDAEMONIA **Retreat, with Lauren Popish**

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Kim Forrester 0:00

According to researchers, 61% of all workers hide facets of themselves in the workplace just so they can fit in. And 73% of the population has a fear of public speaking. So how can we truly speak up, share our stories and stand in our power when we are so fearful of showing people who we are? I'm Kim Forrester, you're listening to the Eudaemonia podcast and, today, it's time to shine a spotlight on the importance of self-expression.

Intro 0:33

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 0:53

Lauren Popish is the founder of The Wave Podcasting which offers educational resources, event-based community, and a Los Angeles recording studio space exclusively for womxn. Through her work at Wave, Lauren aims to empower womxn to rise above imposter syndrome and anxiety, and boldly share their voices. It's my absolute pleasure to be connecting with Lauren today to discuss why authentic self-expression is vital if we truly want to thrive. Lauren Popish, it is such a delight to have you here with me on the Eudaemonia podcast. How are things with you today?

Lauren Popish 1:28

Thank you so much for having me. I'm doing well today, I actually went to see my family recently, my parents who live out of state, and I am getting lots of family time and it feels so therapeutic. It's wonderful.

Kim Forrester 1:43

Lauren, let's talk about self-expression. And first of all, I want to talk about the innumerable pressures that we have on us to fit in, to be nice or, in some cases, to know our place in society. Right? We're social creatures and these immense social expectations can actually compel us, often unconsciously, to either hold ourselves back, or say things that aren't actually truly aligned with us and our belief system. In your view, what does it mean to speak with our authentic voice?

Lauren Popish 2:21

It's a great question. And it's one that, as someone who tries to help women speak up often, through podcasting as the medium, it's something I think a lot about. What I have come to understand authenticity as is, using your voice to express your unique point of view, in spite of fear, or pressure, or potential criticism that could come from friends or family. Speaking in spite of those factors. So,

doing it anyway. Perhaps that sounds simplistic, but it can be so hard just to say - and make the commitment to speak up and say - you know, I really do think that I have a story worth telling; I think that my experience could be valuable or help someone else. Just by admitting that to yourself, and then taking the steps to do it, regardless of imposter syndrome - regardless of friends critique, or your Mum being in the next room and criticising you or judging your your statement - the courage to speak in spite of all of these factors that push up against us, is authenticity. And the beauty of that is, so much of the human experience is shared. So the second that you take that risk, despite people who might not support, there's a whole other community of people who have been waiting to hear their perspective reflected back to them. And by going out and doing that, you're actually telling their story as well.

Kim Forrester 3:58

You mentioned the word courage there. And it certainly, I believe, takes a lot of courage and vulnerability to speak up and tell our story - especially when we inherently know that that story is not going to be widely accepted, or that story steps beyond the boundaries of etiquette, or being nice, or all the other social limitations that we have on us. How can we create safer spaces for ourselves, Lauren, where we are less fearful about speaking up? And perhaps almost as importantly, how can we create these safe spaces for others?

Lauren Popish 4:34

I think the basis of all confidence comes from comfort. So, gaining that courage by creating an environment of comfort and support and safety. So I have a podcast studio for womxn, where we host womxn to come in and try and create that that place of safety. What we did to prepare for that is we went out and we interviewed all kinds of womxn at different phases of podcasting and different phases of, you know, expressing themselves publicly, and asked, you know, "What are the conditions that make you feel confident, and what is it that makes you feel like you're at your best?" And we found a couple of things. There are physical elements that you can tap into that just make your body better at supporting you, as you go off to tell a big story; to be courageous. Those things include - it's funny enough - temperature control. So making sure that you ... our womxn have a lower body temperature, typically, so they'd like to be warmer. We provide things like blankets. Also nourishment of your body; making sure that you're well hydrated. That is such a huge element of feeling comfortable is making sure that your body is nourished, that your vocal cords are hydrated, the right prep in terms of things like making your stance and getting those those suspension arms so that you can sit with proper structure and proper posture, giving good breathing. When you're about to go out and speak there is a physical element to it. And then there's a mental element where you're doing things like meditations, confidence-inspiring meditations, beforehand. Breathing exercises that are a little more visualisation focused. And really, I think this is something that you talk about a lot, but tapping into the 'why' of why you're doing this. If your ultimate goal is to help and share, it doesn't really matter what you say, or "Did I say it the right way? Were the words receive the right way?". Your intent will get you there, and is the only thing that your audience really ultimately cares about. So tapping back into that, 'why'. One part physical, one part mental equals a really comfortable, confident presence that ensures that you're delivering your message in the best possible way. Or at least so it can be received in the best possible way.

Kim Forrester 7:15

Let's talk quickly about self sabotage, because it seems to me that the the easiest way for us to learn to express ourselves authentically is to just get out there and practice. Do you feel though that

people have a way of self sabotaging that huge leap forward in personal growth by choosing the wrong places within which to practice their self expression? For instance, do you feel that there is a habit that some people can have of going online, you know, to the very communities where they somehow unconsciously know that they were going to be laughed at or humiliated? Or do you feel that some people have a habit of going to the most critical or undermining friends in their social circle to start expressing their truth? Have you seen this being a problem? And what can we do about it?

Lauren Popish 8:08

It is so funny that, I think probably everyone could relate to a certain amount of this self sabotage mentality, where it's like, "Why did I not go to the safe place that I know will accept me or help me grow? Why do I go to these places where I know negativity presents itself and kind of thrives?" I think that is true. And Brene Brown, who is such an expert in vulnerability, even she says, yes, to find true love in your relationships, you do have to show yourself; you do have to be vulnerable. But people have to earn your vulnerability. They have to earn your true self. So you don't just walk out into the middle of a mall and start professing your deepest, most vulnerable thoughts and desires. Those people haven't earned the right to know you. You do have to be a friend and a ... you have to be compassionate to yourself when you're trying something new. Because every single person goes through that initial startup period of uncertainty. The difference is, are you going to stick with it? And to stick with it, let's find those people who are going to be allies of ours; who are going to give us the feedback that we need in a manner that is helpful and not critical. And, you know, let's go to those friends who are going to support us, those family members. We don't need to turn to the to the most critical areas first.

Kim Forrester 9:40

Lauren, let's get to a subject that I know many of my listeners will completely resonate with. Many people, in fact most people, have got a lifelong phobia of public speaking. But you actually developed your fear later on in life. What have you learned about why we fear speaking in front of others? And what do we lose most when we lose our voice?

Lauren Popish 10:04

Yes, this is this is one of those vulnerable things that it's taken me so long to be able to speak comfortably about, because it's probably my biggest hurdle that I still every day I'm trying to overcome and work towards. The things that I've learned about public speaking, there's there's kind of two aspects to it. There is a rational part of fear that comes from survival instinct; so the body wanting to protect itself - thinking back to primitive days, when we had to know if that tiger was lurking around the corner. Fear is a very productive, very natural and helpful thing that lives inside all of us. The problem is reaction that our body has to fear can - in the modern day - can really hurt us and stunt us. Because you begin to develop irrational thoughts and kind of catastrophize situations to a point where you're not seeing things clearly or have false beliefs about the situation that you're in. So really public speaking, there's two parts of it, two beliefs that I've had to work on and develop and still am practising every day. One is that a certain amount of anxiety is natural, and perhaps unavoidable. Kind of like I was talking about, it's a natural response. When it becomes phobic, or the fear kind of grows to a point of being debilitating, comes from over-attending to thoughts and sensations. Right? Where you start to fixate on your mind, "Why do I feel this way? Why is my heart racing? I shouldn't feel this way. I've seen other people speak, they didn't look nervous, why do I look nervous?" All of these kinds of irrational thoughts that come out, that is just

really you over-attending to a very natural physical response. Now, if we were instead to say, "Hello, anxiety. You are, you know ... my little primitive brain doesn't know that I'm not in physical danger. And so you're just coming out here to try and help me", instead of giving my brain the indication that something is very wrong, and that they need to kick in even harder; they need to send through more adrenaline and fight or flight symptoms. Instead, if I just say, "Sit next to me anxiety as I go through this process, I know you're here to help", then our body actually ... these sensations naturally go away on their own. And by not telling our brain that it needs to react in such a strong way, it goes away a lot faster. So that's just like one physiological aspect of fear of all kinds, but very much public speaking fear. And then the other half is false beliefs about what our audience thinks of our speaking. Right? That's the big thing. "What are they going to think if I fail, if I if I mess up what I'm saying? What if they can see that I'm sweating, or that I'm shaking? They'll know I'm nervous, they'll think I'm not a professional, they'll think I'm not an expert in my field." And that is so far from fact. We have to remind ourselves that people naturally want others to do well in those settings; that many people suffer from public speaking fear. 75% of the population suffer from a fear of public speaking so they, themselves, are probably applauding your effort to speak, and perhaps, you know, wishing that they could do the same.

Kim Forrester 13:47

Now let's talk about the importance of our 'why'. And you did touch on this earlier on. Many people get caught up in the idea these days that it's important to be seen. Right? And you must be relevant to be validated. And this has created, in my view, an environment where many people are just out there making noise, just so that they don't fade into the shadows or become irrelevant. Would you regard this kind of expression as authentic expression? And do you feel that we're causing harm to ourselves, or others, when we buy into this idea of attention by any means necessary?

Lauren Popish 14:30

Yeah, just to almost answer that question from backwards, forwards. When you're creating noise or speaking or putting yourself out to the public just to keep up the status quo, you can actually harm your own confidence and dilute your authority. Because you're not speaking from a place of authenticity and you're really not adding value, at the end of the day, to get more, I guess, more business-centric. So what can happen is that you'll see lower engagement; people respond less, they will not be as engaged with your story and you yourself will begin to believe, "Wow, I'm not valuable or my story isn't valuable", when that is definitely not true. Every single person has a valuable thing to put out in the world. But what is it that you're putting out? It's way too easy. There's too many tools. It's way too easy to hit record on your on your phone and forget that every time we go out to ask for someone's attention ... think how busy we all are. You have to be dead certain that you are asking and communicating something that is benefiting people's lives. And I think that every single person has a valuable beneficial thing to share. But you always have to think of the person on the other end, and why that person needs to hear it. If you're just making noise out there, I think you're contributing to a culture of distraction, of overwhelm, of burnout. And ultimately, you will leave feeling unconfident and like you're not being received the way you want to. So in a culture where it's just way too easy to produce, before you sit down and make that thing, try and get to that 'why'. Not only your personal 'why', but your 'why' for your audience; for the person, that human individual who will read it, and receive it, and hopefully act on it or do something about what they're hearing. Maybe it means that you're creating less often. You're not making things every single day, because maybe you don't have something valuable to say every day. That's okay.

Kim Forrester 16:53

That's awesome, Lauren, and I totally agree with everything you just said there. I guess the question becomes, then, if we're not expressing ourselves in order to just get the likes or, you know, the viral videos, or whatever it is that we're looking for in terms of validation out there in the world, what is the reward we are looking for? What is it that we are searching for? Or what is it in our body, or our mind, or our psyche that will tell us, "Yeah, that was great. That was authentic expression"?

Lauren Popish 17:27

The only word that comes to mind is 'impact'. What is the impact; the actual outcome of your share? Whatever it is that you're creating - your creation - what's the impact? And people who find that your material, your message, your company, your content, when they are feeling the impact of it, they will let you know. So what you'll find when you go to some people who have been doing this a long time who have very mission-based, very heart-centred and why-based companies, you'll find that they have huge sections of their website or their social media that are testimonials of people reaching out proactively, you know, not prompted, and saying, "Wow, this message resonated with me, I've connected with it so much, I changed my life based on your advice or your action." That's the impact that you're looking for. In social media terms, or in business terms, sometimes that's called engagement. So if it's not likes, it's more authentic engagement. People reaching out to you. People, even better - this is the best if you can create this - reaching out to each other. You've created an environment where people can find each other and discuss, and find community around the topics that you're sharing. Wow, you know. It's not even about you anymore. You can even step out and say, "What have I created where people are finding each other and finding community amongst each other?" That's the best case scenario. So I would say you're looking for impact and you're looking for indications of your impact through people reaching out, commenting, writing you anecdotes, and real, human authentic expressions of gratitude. And I tell you what, you might not be making your money right away, you might not have a very, you know ... your content isn't revenue generating at this point, but you will be able to want to create and produce till the end of time when you when you get messages like that, because they are so gold and so inspiring. So those are the indications of success that I look for, that I encourage others to look for. You know, I help women create podcasts - they're always looking at the follower, the listener count. And I am always trying to indicate or let people know, the listener count is irrelevant. What are they doing with the information? Are they writing you? Are they telling others to listen to your podcast? Are they creating communities in circles where they're getting together to relate to each other and listen to your podcast? Wow, that's the impact that you're looking for and it is so much more lasting and satisfying the likes.

Kim Forrester 20:20

Wow, indeed. I love that answer, Lauren. Now, when it comes to self expression, there's something that I personally continue to struggle with and that is the perception that there's someone already out there telling my story. Right? Someone is already dominating the space that I feel I belong in. And they're really good at it. Right? And they already have a wide ranging audience. For others who feel like me, why should we feel that we have anything to contribute when someone already seems to own that space? Mm hmm.

Lauren Popish 20:57

Well, this is something that, who hasn't? Who hasn't experienced that? I mean, I'm just laughing to myself, because how many times have I said, there's a million podcasting resources out there? What am I really bringing to the table? That's, that's different. And I think it's, it's good to remember that we live in a goo global world, all information is accessible. So really, what we're offering is not necessarily new information. Although sometimes, you know, that isn't the case, maybe we're actually generating something innovative and brand new, that's never been seen before, how lucky that is, would be you know, but in many cases, all the information that we know, everybody else has access to through Google, and every our competitors have access to that same information. So let's just start at a baseline saying, we all have the same materials, we have the same starting point. What's different is your how, how I deliver the information, the things that I care about the training to the audience, based on my own unique perspective, no one else's lived your life. I mean, to think about that is so incredible, no one has walked in my shoes the same exact way that I did. And when I talk about podcasting, no one has your voice. So I love to think of voices unique is your literally your fingerprint, right? It's so authentic just to you. So people learn and receive information in many different ways. It doesn't have to be new, as long as it's true. Who says that Adam Grant, I believe, he doesn't have to be new, as long as it's true. Meaning that you don't have to put out new information, you just have to put it out in a way that connects with people. So your way of sharing based on your own individual unique life experience is going to be different than that other person on Instagram, that other person you see doing that. And there is someone, or many people, a community of people who have been waiting to hear that thing said, the way that you said it, using the examples that you're giving, based on your particular life experience. So there is so much room, I believe that I will continue to believe it. Because there are so many people who just haven't connected with the information which is universal, but needed your unique delivery, your unique perspective and your unique experience to receive it, connect with it, and actually begin to use it to improve their lives in whatever way that you do that.

Kim Forrester 23:46

Lauren, you are keen for women to start a podcast to share their stories with a wider audience. And you do say that they should do it sooner rather than later. Why podcasting rather than say, blogging? And why now?

Lauren Popish 24:05

Such a good question. I'm feeling so ... I mean, this conversation is so wonderful. And you're such a ... you have such great questions. I'm just feeling so energised. But this is like my number one passionate topic, which is 'start a podcast now'. Start right now. Don't wait. If you have a concept or you believe someone has told you, "Hey, you should have a podcast." Don't wait until you feel confident or like you've mastered the topic of podcasting. Start now for a couple reasons. One is that podcasting as a medium to deliver information is a complete green field. When we look at the number of podcasts out there - a lot of people I hear people say this to me all the time, "I think podcasting is really saturated. Everyone I know has a podcast" - and the reality is is that there are 1.5 million podcasts on Apple podcasts which is the largest directory where people distribute their podcast. 1.5 million. It sounds like a lot. But when we look at something like blogging - and blogging has now, today, active blogs online, about 500 million. So there's 1.5 million podcasts, but 500 million blogs. And I'm not sure about you but I have this happen to me all the time where I think, "Man, if only I had started a blog in 2008, when I read the first one, and you know, just had the benefit of being an early participant in a new medium." Those blogs that stuck with it now have hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of followers and subscribers, just because they got in on the

ground floor. There just weren't enough blogs available compared to the number of people consuming blogs. And we are at that exact same point with podcasting right now, where we have way more listeners than we do have podcast producers. And therefore the podcasts that get in early - we're still considering this 1.5 million, we're still considered early days. So if you're able to get a podcast going, maintain it, and keep with it - we know that's the hardest part, not starting, but sticking with it - but doing that for a couple of years, the trajectory of podcasting at the rate that they're being created, we think podcasters have this green field for about two and a half to three more years. So you really want to get in now so that you can get that organic growth that just comes from being first; that comes from being this early adopter and having listeners listen to your podcast, have more listeners find your podcast, just because there's fewer of them out there. What an awesome thing to take advantage of just by being, you know, first to a technology. And then the other aspect that I think is so awesome about podcasting is the concept that we were talking about earlier, which is, there's probably aside from video - right, seeing people's expressions and seeing them deliver information visually - there probably isn't a more authentic medium. Because we use our own voice, which is unique just to us. It's as unique as our fingerprint. I say that all the time because it's so true. And we're able to deliver information in a way that's 100%, empathetic, human, vulnerable, all those things that sometimes get lost in writing, or in social media posts, or in graphics or photographs. I mean, the other side of the coin, is it's the reason that it's a really vulnerable act and that I think it's very intimidating for anyone, but especially for womxn. Which is why I am over here, trying to be the number one cheerleader to say, "Do it anyway. Do it even though you're fearful. Do it even though it's intimidating." Because the bonds and the connections that you can make with your audience are so much deeper than the three seconds you get to convince someone to like your Instagram post.

Kim Forrester 28:13

Wow, that's so insightful. Thank you so much. Lauren, my final question is one that I ask every guest on the Eudaemonia podcast. Lauren, can you offer a simple morning reminder - so this might be a practice, a mantra or an affirmation - something that can help my listeners express themselves more authentically and, shall we say, more unapologetically?

Lauren Popish 28:36

Yes, this is such a good one. I'm going to go back through all these episodes and just like make a list of all the mantras because this is such a good idea. I feel like I need a whole list of them in the mornings to remind me how to how to start the day. Mine that I have used for a while is 'progress over perfection'. I think this is a very human thing. I think this is a very female thing and something that I've learned as I've interviewed so many women who are existing podcasters or prospective podcasters. Just this concept that 'before I get it out into the world, it has to be perfect'. And the reality is that we learn so much faster, and we can create so much better content, and make such bigger strides faster when we put away our perfectionism hat and just produce, make progress and let 'doing' be the best teacher. So not trying to perfect or let perfectionism lead the way but say, "I'm going to learn by doing". So 'progress over perfection' is something that I use in small ways when I'm deciding like, "Should I use this colour or that font?", or I'm getting really hung up on the small parts of running a business and expressing myself. Like, "Is this graphic expressing me properly?" I just have to say "Progress over perfection. Let's get it out. Let's learn something. And then let's do better the next time." And this is something that I am constantly ... this is, like, my little cheerleader mantra that I'm always using with my clients and prospective podcasters. So progress over perfection is my big mantra.

Kim Forrester 30:19

What an incredible mantra. And one that I see, in its simplicity, it gets straight to the core of why so many of us hold back from expressing ourselves and telling our story. So thank you so much for sharing that, Lauren. Lauren Popish, if people want to learn more about you, and particularly about The Wave Podcasting, where can they go to find out more?

Lauren Popish 30:41

So I personally have my own Instagram account that I'm very active on and I would be happy for anyone to reach out to me. It's @laurenpopish and I'm all about the DMs. And, you know, if you want to go beyond business and just get into the personal discussions, that's the right place to be. But if you're interested in starting your own podcast, or maybe have an existing podcast that you're hoping to take to another level, you want to reach more people, you want to be more impactful - all those things we talked about - my company, The Wave Podcasting helps womxn share their stories through the medium of podcasting. We're very active on Instagram, very visual. @thewavepodcasting is our handle. And then we have all kinds of free resources through our website, www.thewavepodcasting.com is our URL. And we have so much material including a brand new guide to crafting, producing, and growing your podcast and we just have, you know, tonnes of material. So I hope there's something there that can help push you along or fill in the gaps of wherever you are in your podcasting journey.

Kim Forrester 31:53

That is just awesome. Lauren Popish, it's just been a delight and personally very inspiring and uplifting hearing your answers today about self-expression. Thank you for coming and joining me here on the Eudaemonia podcast.

Lauren Popish 32:07

Of course. Thank you so much for having me and for the most thoughtful questions. It's it's been a true pleasure.

Kim Forrester 32:14

As John Green wrote in his novel, *The Fault in Our Stars*, "You are so busy being you that you have no idea how utterly unprecedented you are." You have been listening to the Eudaemonia podcast. If you'd like to learn more about how to live a truly flourishing life, please subscribe and check out www.eudaemoniapod.com for more inspiring episodes. I'm Kim Forrester. Until next time, be well, be kind to yourself and share your voice with the world.