



EUDAEMONIA
Vitality, with Polly Campbell

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Kim Forrester 0:00

We all know what it's like to feel bored, uninspired, listless, devoid of energy. And how can we flourish in life when our love of life has run dry? You're listening to the Eudaemonia podcast. I'm Kim Forrester, and today, it's time to inject some energy into the topic of vitality.

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 0:46

Polly Campbell is an author, podcaster, and speaker who writes and talks about practical personal development. She delivers science based strategies and research in a down-to-earth style that can help us all live well, do good, and be happy. Polly's fourth book, released just a few weeks ago, is entitled "You, Recharged". It's my absolute delight to be connecting with Polly today to talk about the importance of vitality and to discuss the ways we can each recharge, revitalise, and reinvigorate our zest for life. Polly Campbell, thank you for joining me here on the Eudaemonia podcast today.

Polly Campbell 1:29

Oh, happy to be here. Thanks for having me.

Kim Forrester 1:32

Polly, vitality is such an enigmatic concept, I think, because it incorporates the physical, the emotional, and in many cultures the quintessentially spiritual as well. You know all too well, what it can feel like to be completely devoid of vitality, right? Your personal story is one of not feeling like you were particularly energised or enthusiastic about life. What does it feel like in your experience, when you are totally revitalised?

Polly Campbell 2:03

Oh, I think it feels enthusiastic. I think it feels curious, energised and engaged. You want to be a part of life. And you recognise that even the tough times are part of that texture, part of that nuance of our lives. And so instead of being afraid of them, you don't welcome them, but you're able to sit back and say, "Okay, I have the energy to deal with this, I can learn from this, I can be a part of this, and really engage with all of my life". I think it's a creative space, I think it's a vibrant space. And it just feels better. It feels like you can get up and be a part of the world as opposed to watching it go by.

Kim Forrester 2:45

I love that you mentioned the word "curiosity" there because throughout your book, I noticed several recurring themes emerging and one of them was definitely this need for curiosity, or the need to quench our desire for curiosity. But there was also a recurring theme of courage, right? Courage to step out of our comfort zone, and the willingness to honour our sense of restlessness. Do you agree that these three factors, so curiosity and courage and honouring our own restlessness, are they important when it comes to vitality? And are there any other concepts that are intrinsic to this idea of revitalization?

Polly Campbell 3:26

Absolutely, I think they can drive it in many respects, because we need to step out of this place of overthinking, of worry, of anxiety. And curiosity for me is a real anecdote to that, you know, or antidote to that. And when things are going haywire or hard, if I can step into a place where I'm wondering, then I'm out of worry. I'm out of micromanaging. I'm out of the upset that comes with hard, and it changes things from "I'm so mad at my husband that this happened" to a relationship or conversation where I can ask the question, "Hi, I'm wondering why this bothered you so much. I'm wondering why this happened between us." It moves it to a more active state. And obviously, when we are curious, then we're bringing opportunities to us. We're seeing possibilities. We're experiencing things in the world because we're part of it. And with that comes a certain vitality. Now, this isn't always easy. You know, you mentioned my story where I was just completely worn out, stuck, burned out, sitting on the couch, really not that engaged in my life. It takes courage to go from that spot of a lack of involvement or a passive involvement in life to one where I'm jumping in to this place I like to call optimal discomfort, but it feels better. So we have this notion as human beings that "oh, I need to stay where it's easy where I know just what to do where I'm comfortable". I think it's just the opposite. I think that's where we kind of wither. We are expansive people, we are curious. It's wired into our brains and body, we want to expand, we want to create, we want to experience new things. When we are, we feel excited, and we feel a part of things. So optimal discomfort is this place where there's not so much discomfort that we're paralysed and we can't function, because that's a risk too; if we're flooded and overwhelmed. But we have an optimum amount. We don't know everything. We're not in a place of mastery. So we're engaged and we're learning and we're growing. And we're curious. To me, that's really the sweet spot of developing and sustaining vitality in our lives.

Kim Forrester 5:50

So that answer there truly encapsulates this idea of how we can enhance our emotional vitality, right? It starts obviously, with our mindset, and that sense of wondering and honouring the discomfort, as you're saying. Does that emotional vitality then lead into physical vitality? And perhaps even spiritual vitality? Is that the direction on which you think it flows?

Polly Campbell 6:14

You know, I think it's fully holistic. So mind, body, spirit. Absolutely right, what you said. However, I think it can flow both directions, or all directions. So, where I started was physically, I was really tired, I didn't want to get up in the morning, I didn't want to get going. And I had to start there to start nourishing my physical body with simple, simple steps, to then be more in touch with the spiritual and the emotional. Now that my body is stronger, I often do just the opposite. I spend the mornings nurturing my emotional, self and my spiritual self, so that it creates a circular pattern. When we are

participating, we are giving ourselves we're building that core energy, that essence within us and it feeds everything else. So I like to think of it as starting where you are, if you're feeling the sense of lack in your emotional vitality, start there. If you're feeling drop dead tired, where you can't get to work in the morning, or parent your children, or be in a relationship, start there. I needed to work on all three of those things. And, and fortunately, it's a fairly simple process, I found. I was surprised. But, it's worth doing, because then you get off the bench and you start playing in your life, as opposed to riding the bench and watching the game go on around you. I think it's like a car engine. When the car is out of its spark, when the battery is dead, we go out and we charge its physical body, we charge that battery, and then what do we do, we drive it around the neighbourhood, until it builds its energy to hold its own to sustain its own. And then we can leave it in the driveway for a couple of days. And it's still good to go. So sometimes we just need a jumpstart. And it can come in the physical, or the spiritual, or the emotional, it can spark everything else. But we have to start with that jump.

Kim Forrester 8:14

I love what you say there, start where you are. And I guess the important thing is to not allow ourselves to languish in that sense of no energy and no enthusiasm, but actually take a step, whatever that step may be. Polly, what do you think is the biggest misconception about vitality, that you would like my listeners to understand and appreciate?

Polly Campbell 8:38

I have thought of vitality as something that was for people other than me, you know, I live with a chronic illness. So I'm 50 years old, I'm getting grey hair. Thank you, teenage daughter, and I am having these big life experiences like everyone is and I assumed, well, maybe this is as good as it gets for me, right? That didn't fit with my thoughts on life and my experience of life. But I thought, well, I'm 50 and I've got rheumatoid arthritis, so maybe this is as good as it gets. That is absolutely not true. In fact, one study shows that all these elderly women, the majority of whom were disabled, they did a survey with all these elderly women, the majority of whom were disabled, needed full time caregivers to help them get dressed and take care of their daily business. And yet, more than half of them experienced vitality and exuded vitality, because they were interested in learning. They were interested in relationships with other people. They were not complaining about the situation they were in. They were learning how to live with the situation they were in. And what I believe is, we just need to give ourselves some attention. You don't have to wake up wondering if this is as good as it gets. It's not, it can always become something more if you want that. Now, we have to work for it, but the working part of it, that we make sound so hard, that's the living. You know, we think life is something to figure out. It's the living. It's not like you have to sit up one morning and say, "Well, now I have to go to my vitality job". All we have to do, is get up in the morning and decide, oh, I'm going to get into my life today. And it happens in the living. But absolutely, I think this is for all of us at any time in our life, I don't think there's an age barrier, or a money barrier, or a weight barrier, or a health barrier. I think this is for us.

Kim Forrester 10:36

I want to flip what you just said on its head there, Polly, because you're talking about the many people out there that certainly feel that they must settle for life, whatever life is presenting to them, it's good enough and they have to settle for it. Let me take you to another group of people, including myself, where we have a good life, where we feel we have a truly blessed life. And for all intents and purposes, our lives are amazing. And we cannot complain, we cannot ask for more. And

therein lies the problem, I feel. There are times, Polly, where I feel that I have no right to ask for more from life because my life is already so truly wonderful and blessed. Do you think that many of us, those of us with a good life, feel undeserving of true vitality?

Polly Campbell 11:33

Absolutely, I was one of those people, right? Kim, I mean, you mentioned your own experience. On paper, I have a fantastic life. I'm married to a good person, we have a happy marriage, my daughter is healthy. I am living my dream job. I created it. I'm self employed. And I was ashamed. When I realised how depleted I felt. How burned out I felt. My marriage was very familiar and comfortable, but not interesting. My daughter was doing her own thing. She's a teenager now. And we weren't connecting in a deep way. We were connecting over television programmes. I was waking up every morning, counting the hours until I could go back to bed. And I was sitting on the couch drinking my coffee in some of those mornings, feeling so embarrassed for all of this. I mean, what right do I have? I have a safe shelter, I have support in my life. What right do I have to think I deserve more. And here's the thing, we all deserve more, we all deserve the opportunity to create the life we want. Now, you might not want what I have, or what I'm working for or what I hope to create in my life. That might not be for you. That's okay, this is a very customised thing. You have to decide what works for you and what feels comfortable. But the point is, I didn't want to sit on the sidelines, I had all this and I was finding it difficult to enjoy what I did have. And now I will tell you that, you know when we're creating sustainable vitality in our lives, when we're engaging in our lives this way, the small things feel even better. They're the things that matter, the fact that I can get up and have a hot cup of coffee in the morning, every morning. That's a moment for me. I'm not exaggerating that. So everything takes on a boldness and a brightness. And it infuses the other things we want in our life. So, what has happened is then we draw opportunities to us, and possibilities that we couldn't even imagine before. And that allows us to go out into this world and create some momentum. One thing we know about vitality is it's contagious. You know what that feels like when you're in a room with somebody who's really got this life force, you know, and in eastern traditions, they call it a life force or a qi, right, or a prana. When you're in the room with somebody that has that, you know it instantly. They're the people that are just fun, you always feel good and better about yourself, when you're around them. They're always talking about something interesting or doing something interesting. Or they're sitting quietly, and you feel like you're the only one in the room. You're the only one they are interested in because they're so energetic, they bring that higher energy. That's what I wanted. And when I began to focus on that, and really allow myself to bring that into my life, I started being a better neighbour, a better mother, a better volunteer in my community. I started to make changes personally, that helped me make changes globally. And we need that. We need that momentum. When you're living the life you want, when you are creating this kind of energy within you and outside of you, you're changing the world. And that's what we need from all of us right now, to bring that best energy and you got to feel it first.

Kim Forrester 15:00

I just adore that answer. I'm sitting here nodding vigorously, Polly, because I would hope that we all get to a point at some stage in our lives where we understand our own worth and our own value. And we choose to revitalise ourselves, for ourselves. But the fact is that there are many of us in the world that aren't quite at that stage. And yet, we can understand the importance of revitalization, of reinvigoration within ourselves because of the way that it will help and inspire and lift others. So I love that you touched on that. You do write in your book that we need to give energy to receive energy and you were talking earlier on about, you know, we have to do the work. It takes an investment of our energy to become more revitalised. But as a recovering people pleaser, Polly, I

have given my energy away relentlessly in the past. I've given to people and to projects and to practices that essentially have actually drained my vitality. Is there a way for us to tell when we're giving our energy away in a way that is ultimately going to revitalise us and not deplete us?

Polly Campbell 16:21

I think it is an interesting idea to talk about, when I'm so tired sitting on the couch all those early mornings and thinking this is where I want to go. And yet I realised that I had to get up and do something and I'm like, wait a minute, "I'm too tired to do stuff. That's the problem". I will tell you that- and I call it a very technical term in the book, I say, take the next easy peasy step. This has to be simple. This has to be practical, it has to align with your values, fit within your schedule, fit your family, right, it has to be authentic to you. Because we're not talking about a self-help tip or a quick fix. We're talking about a lifestyle, about drawing energy in and giving energy out. Energy does two things, it transforms or transfers. So when I'm sitting on the couch, in all those dark days, when you show up in a room, no matter what room, when you're on a podcast, we're always bringing energy, it's just a matter of what kind of energy you're bringing, we're always bringing it, right? So in those days, I was bringing a very low energy, I was getting a low energy response, I was transferring low energy in return, I was getting not a whole lot of interest from my daughter, I wasn't that in tune with my husband, I didn't love my job, I was getting low energy. And so what I think we need to do is understand the areas first that are draining that energy- or one area, I've come back to this time and time again, look at the lack. So start with where you're feeling drab or dull or bored or burned out, go there, wake up in the morning or take an hour in the afternoon or five minutes even and think about your day, where were the times you were really excited or engaged. What were you doing or thinking of doing? Where were the times where you're feeling this area of lack? If you have a great weekend, and you wake up Monday morning, and you can't seem to get out of bed, hmm, I wonder what you're going to do next that is pulling your energy away. If you're giving to someone else, and you're in this people pleasing model, which I understand very well. If you're in that model, and afterwards, you walk away, and you feel like, oh, I didn't get enough from that, or they didn't appreciate me enough, or I'm so tapped out because they're so demanding, or that wasn't- didn't go like I wanted, that's a drain. So, we need to understand where our energy is draining away. And then slowly, one little step at a time, we start to plug those drains, not by limiting our behaviours, but by adding in things that fill us up. So start with lack. I did this by sitting on the corner of the couch and doing just what I suggested. "What doesn't feel good in my life right now?". And there were a lot of things. It wasn't a judgement call. It's not bad or good. I was just in these situations and I wasn't feeling inspired about work. So, let's start with that. Well, why am I not? Where's the energy draining out? What do I love about work, what's not so good, then you start to plug those drains and replacing that energy you're losing with things that feel better.

Kim Forrester 19:34

That's really powerful, because I know that if we were all to sit and honestly reflect, we would know the themes and the parts of our lives that are actually depleting and draining our vitality from us. So that's really powerful and wise insight there, Polly. You write that vitality starts at our core, in our very essence, or our soul, and it grows from there. Earlier on, we touched on the sense of physical vitality and emotional vitality and how to boost those senses. But if there was one action that we could take to boost our spiritual vitality, and that core vitality, what would you say it is?

Polly Campbell 20:18

I think this is an interesting question and I go around and around with this. And the reason why is because, I think it's all spiritual. And I think energy, which is what we're talking about here is universal and expanding, contracting, and doing all those things to us and around us and within us all the time. So I think the real key is to tap into that energy in whatever form you believe it is. If for you, that's a god form, take the god form, you know, there's not a right or wrong way. And I think we get caught up in definitions, you'll know what it is for you, you'll feel that for you. And I think we need to allow ourselves time to see what is working and notice, recognise our place within all of this. And I just talked about going to a place of lack to identify the drains and the places where we need to reboot our energy. I think it's equally as important to take minutes throughout the day, to connect with the core of our energy through gratitude, through appreciation, through mindfulness. And when I talk about the minutes of our day, here's how I do it. I will do like, a three minute gratitude exercise in the morning, as part of my morning routine, I will do mindfulness exercise, when I shift from one project to the other at my desk, I'm talking 30 seconds, okay? This has to be practical. And it has to become part of our second nature, because it's happening within us anyhow, the only difference is, now I'm asking you to tune in to that spiritual side, you're not without it, it's existing within you. So when I say be mindful, what I feel that is for me is to sit back and stop. And just pay attention, pay attention to the computer, or the feet on the floor, or the trees blowing outside my window, whatever it is. But that pause allows you to connect to the energy you have within. And it reminds you that you're part of this universal source. I mean, human beings are made of the same components that make the universe. We are literally made of stardust, let's rise to that. Let's own that, let's be a part of that we have that kind of spiritual energy within, I want us to slow down and through gratitude and mindfulness, or being out in nature, recognise that it's a part of who we are.

Kim Forrester 22:49

In all of my work, I'm constantly falling back on this phrase, "wellbeing from the inside out". And that's specifically what you just touched on there in that answer. Polly, you say the things that revitalise us will change over time, and that we need to be mindful of these fluctuations. But tell me, are there some things that will always be good for revitalization? Are there vitality non-negotiables?

Polly Campbell 23:18

I think there are, and the first one is take care of the basics. And this to me was one of the hardest for me to recognise. Take care of the basics, you need to move your body a little bit. That can be vacuuming, that can be gardening, that can be walking the dog, that can be running a marathon, I don't know what movement is for you. But our bodies are made to move and we need to keep going and keep them moving. I do 20 minutes of movement or more a day. And I don't call it exercise because I don't like exercise. So I create my own definition of what that looks like for me. And it's been sustainable, and healthy for me. I think we need to nourish our bodies with the right food. I started eating more fruits and vegetables. That's pretty much all I changed and it made a huge difference. And we need to sleep. I put myself on a sleep schedule, my body was failing because I was exhausted. So I need to get the basics right. And beyond that, I think we need to take care of the emotional and the mental, we need to understand our energy drains and fill them up by making stuff. We need to create. We are built to do that we feel better when we're knitting or painting or writing books or making a garden or a new recipe. And the third thing I think is, know where you are in the world. You we get the short amount of time we just do not have time on this planet, to worry about the things that aren't working. We can be in a state of appreciation and curiosity and gratitude and love and anger and frustration and all of that and be okay. So, as part of our spiritual growth, I also think of our emotional growth and labelling our emotions, understanding our emotional

vocabulary. So we can understand the information and the cues that our emotions are giving us. They're teaching us, they're allowing us to connect with ourselves in a deeper way and with others. So I also recommend taking care of our emotional business by developing a vocabulary beyond happy and sad, of what we're feeling so we can understand that experience better.

Kim Forrester 25:32

Polly, you make a beautiful distinction in your book that I think is really important to highlight, particularly because I am someone who has been into the dark fog of depression a few times. You say that when we're dealing with depression, burnout, anxiety, that it's really important to understand these are conditions, not failings. Do you feel that we could revitalise more easily, more effectively, in our most challenging moments, if we were to take the wrongness out of them?

Polly Campbell 26:06

Absolutely. And I think take the wrongness out of it all. Out of everything we're doing, right? We are rigid in our thinking at times. We think in terms of right or wrong, black or white, have to do it this way or not at all. I think that's hogwash. I don't think any of that is accurate. And I think it keeps us stuck in this mindset that we have somehow failed ourselves or failed the world, if we're depressed. If you're depressed, go to a doctor. It's treatable, they can support you, be open about it, let's talk about it so that we can help one another because most of us in reality will be depressed at one time or another, and some of us will be clinically depressed. So I think understanding the distinction between being stuck and depressed is, is important. You know, when you're stuck, you just don't know what you want to do. You're not sure what's next for you. And you're stuck in that idea. But you're excited to figure it out. When you're depressed, you're having chemical imbalances in your brain and changing conditions in your body, to make it difficult to think that way at all. So therapy, and doctors and medication may be helpful for you. I'm not a doctor. But I think we need to remove this idea that somehow we are doing something wrong. So we can get to the business of living. And I like to think of things in terms of situations or circumstances, things are not right or wrong. They just are. Now some things bring about difficult challenges, things I have to become more skilled at dealing with or learning about or experiencing. So, some things require more practice for me. And that difficulty then can become a problem, right? Because we'll talk in turn, "Well, I just need to get this figured out". Or "This is so bad. This is not what I wanted at all". No, it's not bad. It's a situation. Work the situation, work the circumstance, learn about it, engage with it, and see how you can expand through it. And when you take that mindset, when you take that approach, life opens up a little because you're more willing to go get the help you need in any situation. It's not a feeling. It's like, oh, I need to solve this circumstance, or I want to learn about this. So I'm gonna find the person to help me and that person might be a doctor or your husband or a teacher or a book or whatever it is, and frees us up to go forward and creating the experiences we want next.

Kim Forrester 28:40

Polly, my final question is one I ask every guest on the Eudaemonia podcast. Can you offer my listeners a morning reminder? So this may be a practice, a mantra, perhaps an affirmation, something that can help my listeners feel more revitalised as they start each day.

Polly Campbell 28:56

As I sip on my coffee, and start my day with my coffee. You know, I had a lot of ideas about this because I do morning rituals and, and these things to help me get going. But to be honest, the most important aspect of my morning and really my day is quiet time. And I say it just like that, because sometimes that looks like meditation. Sometimes that looks like sitting quietly and watching the sun come up or having a quiet cup of coffee. Sometimes that means reading a book I want to study, with concepts I want to learn. But it's essential to me and I really believe for all of us, if we want to recharge, to have moments alone in the quiet with ourselves and to let whatever feelings come in, come and go, to notice who you are, to ground yourself in this day going forward. And, it's the one thing that I must do every day to just feel within myself, just feel settled and to prevent the feelings of overwhelm or worry that can creep in, especially right now. And so get up, get in a comfortable place and decide on this day what that quiet moment is gonna look like for you. And I live with other people who are here all the time right now. And so I get up early to do this because it's that important to me. And I'll sit there for 15 minutes and sip my coffee sometimes and decide what my day and I'm going to look like, and the energy I'm going to bring to it.

Kim Forrester 30:31

You know, time after time when it comes to these morning reminders, I am struck by just how simple the most powerful wellbeing practices are. So I love that. Give yourself a quiet moment to find yourself before you start your day. Polly Campbell, your brand new book is called "You, Recharged" and it is all about revitalization. If people want to find out more about this wonderful new book you've written, yourself, your work, your messages, where can they find out more?

Polly Campbell 31:02

Come find me. I have a very creative website name called www.pollycampbell.com. So you can start there, and I'm on Facebook. We have a community there under Polly Campbell, Author. Find me on Twitter @PLCampbell. I'm all over the place and I really am very open to discussions about this. I think we can learn a lot from each other and I welcome hearing the ideas of others and we're going through this time together and we might as well share our best ideas with each other to help through. So, come find me at pollycampbell.com, and you can link to my podcast and the book there, or my book is at Bookshop and Amazon and wherever books are sold.

Kim Forrester 31:42

Well Polly Campbell, you are simply resonant with vitality. So I want to thank you so much for bringing that beautiful energy with you today, here on the Eudaemonia podcast. Thanks for coming along.

Polly Campbell 31:52

Thank you for having me. I appreciate it and I enjoyed the time.

Kim Forrester 31:56

As the Finnish poet Edith Södergran reminds us, "The inner fire is the most important thing mankind possesses." You've been listening to the Eudaemonia podcast. 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. I'm Kim Forrester. Until next time, be well, be kind to yourself, and revitalise your life.