

EPISODE 01

[0:00:04.0] LL: It was because I was living a lie, in the sense that I was living someone else's dreams. Some else was telling me what to do. I wasn't being my true self. This I'm sure can be relatable to all, to many. It was just some dark times. It was some dark times.

[INTRO]

[0:00:31.7] LW: Hello friends and welcome back to the At The End Of The Tunnel Podcast. In this episode, we're going to hear about the story of a man who is dissatisfied with his lucrative career as a broker, while also quietly battling with depression. After randomly catching that movie The Motorcycle Diaries on television one night, Leon Logothetis decided to quit his job in the family business and go on an adventure.

The catch was he couldn't take any money. In order to get from place to place, he had to rely solely on the kindness of strangers, plus he had to get somebody new to feed him everyday and to house him each night. I know. Sounds crazy, right? Well, the kindness had a two-way street, because whenever he crossed paths with somebody who was especially kind to him, he would return their kindness in a unique way of his own.

Leon ended up exploring this special travel a few times and he went on to film his adventures, write books about them and thus, The Kindness Diaries was born. Eventually, Leon's adventures even landed him on the platform of all platforms, Netflix. There are currently two seasons of The Kindness Diaries that you can watch.

Now we're going to hear the backstory of what inspired Leon Logothetis to take that initial leap of faith that has in turn inspired the world. I've been fortunate to call Leon a friend for several years now and his bravery and curiosity and his unfiltered kindness still inspires me to this day. I think hearing Leon's backstory will also inspire you. Without further ado, I'm pleased to introduce you to Mr. Leon Logothetis.

[EPISODE]

[0:02:27.3] LW: Leon, thanks for coming on to the podcast. I always like to start these conversations by talking about childhood. What would you say, thinking back to your childhood, what would you say was the toy or activity that you remember enjoying the most?

[0:02:47.8] LL: Ooh, that's an easy one. I thought you're going to hit me with a real curved ball there, but you're clever, so you ask the easy questions first.

[0:02:55.7] LW: That's right.

[0:02:59.2] LL: I would say definitely soccer. I loved playing soccer. I loved reading about soccer. I loved watching soccer. It was something that really kept me going in many ways. I know that sounds melodramatic, but it really was something that kept me in the moment.

[0:03:16.7] LW: What was it about soccer that that kept you going? What did you love about it?

[0:03:21.6] LL: Yeah. I mean, I loved the game. I was very competitive. I liked winning and I didn't like losing, let's put it that way. I grew up in England. England is a very big soccer country. I mean, it's called football in England, but I'll call it soccer. We play at school. When I came home from school, I'd play at home. Then when I went to bed, I'd read newspapers and magazines about soccer. Was just like being in the zone.

[0:03:51.1] LW: Is that how you made friends? Or is that how you felt you're able to prove something to yourself, or to your family? Do you remember any intentions like that?

[0:04:02.0] LL: Yeah. I mean, I'm not so sure about proving anything to my family, but it was a way to make friends, but it was just being in flow and not having to worry about everyday life and being in the zone and being like Bruce Lee said, in no mind. When I was playing soccer, that's where I was.

[0:04:21.9] LW: What was your favorite position?

[0:04:24.8] LL: Well, that's interesting. I used to be a goalkeeper. Then for many years I was a keeper and then I always wanted the glory. As a goalkeeper, you don't really have much glory. I switched and became a striker.

[0:04:36.6] LW: Just for the glory.

[0:04:38.3] LL: Basically, yes.

[0:04:40.2] LW: Okay. Were you a better striker than you were a goalkeeper?

[0:04:43.9] LL: I think I was actually. I think I was definitely a better striker than I was a goalkeeper. Yeah.

[0:04:49.3] LW: I remember reading in one of your first books, it was your second book actually, you told a story about something that your coach had said to you around being a striker. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[0:05:01.3] LL: Yeah. I don't remember exactly what I said in the book, but basically, so I was a goalkeeper and I wanted to become a striker. That's the opposite of being a goalkeeper. I was a striker. I played five or six games and I was just useless. He kept on telling me, "Keep going, keep going. I believe in you. I believe in you." I kept going and I kept going and then I became really good.

I remember hearing him on the sidelines saying, "Give it to the Greek. Give it to the Greek." That was amazing, because he was the coach and he was like, "Give the ball to Leon. Give the ball to Leon, because Leon knows what he's doing." I think that's what he meant anyway.

[0:05:50.5] LW: It's funny, because I read your book. I didn't read it in preparation for this interview. I read it years ago back when it first came out, but that was a passage that really stuck out to me. I remember tearing up a little bit, because in the book you had said that the coach, he asked you first, "Do you believe in yourself?" You were at a loss for words, if I remember correctly. Then he told you he believed in you. Am I remembering it correctly?

[0:06:19.3] LL: Yeah, pretty much. I mean, that sounds like something he would say and definitely, it jives with my memory. I mean, he was very positive. I didn't believe in myself. Sometimes, you need someone else to believe in you for you to wake up to your own magnificence.

[0:06:36.6] LW: Was he one of the first people in your life to express that so directly?

[0:06:42.2] LL: I had another teacher before him when I was 13, 14, if my memory serves me correct. She would do the same thing. I would feel like she believed in me. I would feel like she saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. Because she saw it in me, slowly, slowly over a period of years, I started to see it in myself. That's really one of the reasons why I do what I do and I go around to schools and speak. I see kids that don't believe in themselves.

[0:07:12.6] LW: You also had some experience with being bullied as a kid as well, right?

[0:07:15.4] LL: Yeah, absolutely. Feeling very alone, very broken. On the outside, I lived a very cuddled life. I had everything you could ever want. On the inside, I had nothing you would want.

[0:07:29.3] LW: What was your mental state like when you were growing up and you were privileged and having those experiences?

[0:07:37.4] LL: I was very shy. I felt very alone. I felt totally unseen. That's really one of the reasons why I do what I do.

[0:07:49.9] LW: Who did you talk to about that when you were a kid, though? Anyone?

[0:07:52.9] LL: No one. No one. That's why there are so many kids. Not just kids, but adults who feel so unseen. That's why the message of being seen, feeling someone's essence and making them feel valued is so important.

[0:08:12.2] LW: Okay. Just to flash forward a little bit, you go through I'm assuming you went to university? You're finishing your education. You finishing your education and then what happens?

[0:08:24.1] LL: I end up working in the City of London in a brokerage firm. I knew from a young age, I never wanted to do that, but it was I don't want to say forced upon me, but certainly it was – I felt that that was my destiny. Other people's dream was for me to do that. I did that. I did it for a few years. I think many people can relate to doing something that they really hate, but there's a sense of fear about changing one's direction in life. That's what happened to me.

[0:09:08.7] LW: At that point, again, I like to speak to everything through the lens of a mental state, because when people talk about experiencing anxiety or depression as adults, it usually was not something that they experienced as a young child and I'm just wondering in your case, because you talked about this also in the book about your battle with depression, I'm wondering when that actually first began. When did you first know that that was – things had shifted internally and then you found yourself wrestling with that?

[0:09:42.4] LL: I'd say 15 or 16, when I went from middle school to high school. It's a little bit different in England, but it was around that age. It was at that age that it just all started to fall apart inside.

[0:09:59.4] LW: Then once you started working for the brokerage firm in London, that was just – every day you're experiencing some battle internally.

[0:10:09.9] LL: Oh, a 100%. I think most of us are, right? It's not like it's not a unique thing. It doesn't matter if you have a billion dollars in the bank, or if you have no money in the bank. The feelings are the same.

[0:10:21.9] LW: Did you feel guilty because you had so much material success and yet, you weren't happy at the time? Because this was back before speaking about mental health was a commonly accepted thing.

[0:10:34.8] LL: 100%. I would say this to myself, “What's wrong with you? How can you be depressed? How can you be overeating? How can you drink too much when you have everything? What's wrong with you? What's wrong with you?” Day in, day out. Yeah.

[0:10:55.8] LW: What happened? How did you finally deal with that?

[0:11:00.2] LL: Well, it's a process really. When I was 19-years-old, I went to my first therapist. I've been to many since. It's the willingness and the desire to share your pain. That set me free. Many of us even today feel weak when we share our pain. Oh, what about the starving kids? I can't share my pain. Well, they don't want to face their pain. I share this in my speeches. I'm like, “Look, if you don't share your pain, it will consume you. If you don't share your pain, it will destroy you. If you do share your pain, it will set you free.” That truly is the secret to life, but you have to do it with someone safe.

If I go out and share my pain with someone who doesn't understand, they're going to make me feel worse. You've got to find someone that gets it, someone that feels it, someone that understands it, someone who has empathy, someone that is caring, someone that holds your vulnerability, instead of squashes it.

[0:12:04.7] LW: Right. Even with multiple – I mean, with certain therapists, you have to find the right fit in order to feel you're safe enough to be able to open up in that way.

[0:12:14.0] LL: 100%. You can find a therapist that's perfectly good for someone else, but is terrible for you. You got to find that right balance, because if you're in a vulnerable state with someone who you're sharing your pain with and they react in the wrong way, it can do a tremendous amount of damage.

[0:12:37.7] LW: We're going to get to this point where you leave the brokerage firm and you go through the next steps of becoming who you are right now, was there any inkling of vision, or any idea that one day you may be traveling around the world and spreading kindness and doing all the things that you're doing now back when you were at the brokerage firm. Did you have any idea, any premonitions when you were coming up that your life would go in that direction at all?

[0:13:13.1] LL: Absolutely not. I had no idea. Sometimes when I look back at it now, I'm like, "Well, what the hell just happened? What did you think was going to happen? What did you think your life was going to amount to if you were projecting your life into the future as you were working at the brokerage firm?" Look, I thought that I would – That's a very good question. I mean, it wasn't going to end well. Let's put it that way. It really, really wasn't going to end well.

I mean, it was again on the outside, people would look at me and they'd be like, "Oh, you've got everything. You're so strong," after I had my meltdown, one of my many. When they saw me having the meltdown they'd be like, "I can't believe it. I can't believe that this happened to you."

[0:14:01.3] LW: Talk about that for a second. What is that? What kind of meltdown are you referring to? What does that mean for someone who's never had a meltdown?

[0:14:10.1] LL: Light. Mr. Light Watkins. Do I really have to answer that question? I will. I guess there's no point in coming on your show if I don't speak my truth.

[0:14:21.4] LW: Right. Yeah.

[0:14:25.6] LL: Well, I was doing this family thing. It was actually a family brokerage firm. It was just too much for me. My meltdown was a very dark depression. I would say, probably drinking a little bit too much. I would say that I was overeating. I don't know about clinically depressed, but I could very well be clinically depressed. It was because I was living a lie, in the sense that I was living someone else's dreams, someone else was telling me what to do. I wasn't being my true self. This I'm sure can be relatable to all, to many. It was just some dark times.

[0:15:04.2] LW: It wasn't just one day or one episode. It lasted over multiple days, multiple moments.

[0:15:10.2] LL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Also, I would say and you know this man. You know that however much you go on the right path, there were always times when you fall off that

path. However enlightened you maybe, whatever that word means, that however enlightened you maybe, there's still darkness waiting to devour you.

[0:15:31.9] LW: Right. Would you show up to work drunk? What's one tangible –

[0:15:36.2] LL: No. No, no, no, no. It was more like binge drinking. It wasn't alcoholism per se, but it was binge drinking. It was just drinking too much. It was eating too much. It was not looking after myself. It was sometimes an inability to get out of bed. Just stuff like that, like being at work and being why the hell am I here? What am I doing?

[0:16:06.5] LW: At what point did you just decide, “I just can't do this anymore”? What was that moment like?

[0:16:12.2] LL: That's an interesting point. I basically watched the movie The Motorcycle Diaries, which –

[0:16:17.6] LW: What made you watch that movie? Did you go by yourself?

[0:16:20.4] LL: It was totally random. It was totally random. I just turned on the TV one day.

[0:16:26.3] LW: By yourself in your flat in London.

[0:16:28.5] LL: Yeah, and it was on. It was about to come on. I just watched it and I was just mesmerized by it, because it's a romanticized version of Che Guevara traveling around South America relying on kindness. The interesting part was in the movie, Che's father wanted him to stay and be a doctor. He's like, “No, I'm leaving.” He left. Then he goes on these adventures and he connects with all these amazing people. He has good days, he has bad days. He finds himself in the eyes of others.

[0:16:58.4] LW: He's living on kindness, right? Kindness of strangers?

[0:17:01.2] LL: Yeah. Basically, basically yes.

[0:17:04.1] LW: What was your thought after watching that movie?

[0:17:09.2] LL: I was like, “Look, there's another way to live.” I don't have to sit behind this desk anymore. I don't have to follow other people's dreams. There are people who live from their hearts, not just from their heads. It's not just all about making money. There's a whole – humanity is waiting to embrace you, the good and the bad. It was just an awakening.

[0:17:30.8] LW: Then you go to work the next day and tell everybody to kiss your ass? Or how does it work? How do you extricate yourself?

[0:17:36.5] LL: Well, it's difficult to tell your father to, “Go kiss your ass.” So no, I didn't do that.

[0:17:41.0] LW: What did you do?

[0:17:42.9] LL: It took me a little bit of time. It wasn't an overnight thing, but that was the moment. Once that happened, I knew that it was done. I just told them, “Look guys, I can't do this anymore. Clearly, I'm not functioning properly. Clearly, this isn't something that I'm able to continue to do. I want to move on,” and I did.

[0:18:02.0] LW: They just said, “Okay.”

[0:18:05.2] LL: Well, I don't know about that, but they didn't try to stop me. Well, they couldn't have stopped me.

[0:18:09.7] LW: I feel so many people are in that exact same situation, because you have the biggest influence in a lot of people's lives are their family. If your family has been fortunate enough to have their own business and that business is fortunate enough to be successful and to provide for so many people and that it's become a heritage in people's families and they want to keep it going, yet you don't want to have anything to do with that. For whatever reason, that's got to be one of the most difficult things to do is to pull away from that, particularly if it involves you being a part of some financial gain associated with that relationship. Can you talk a little bit about that in terms of your decision-making?

[0:19:00.5] LL: Yeah. I mean, sometimes pain pushes you to make decisions that you wouldn't make if you weren't in pain. This I would imagine is relatable to many. We spend our lives trying to fight pain, trying to not allow pain into our lives. Pain is a great teacher. Had I not been in pain, I would not have quit. The quitting enabled me to be sitting here talking to you; enabled me to have adventures and to share my stories with the world and to be touched by many, many people's magnificence throughout my journeys around the world.

[0:19:53.0] LW: That movie, it turned a light on inside of you. Was that light bright enough though for you to be able to see conversations like this and Netflix episodes and all the speaking that you've been doing around the world? Or did you just think, "I just need to just be out in the world and just be myself for a little while," and whatever is going to happen after that is going to be great?

[0:20:16.5] LL: Yeah. No, I never thought about Netflix. Netflix wasn't even around then. It was still blockbuster.

[0:20:21.9] LW: I just mean like a platform. Did you think that other people were going to see me doing this journey and get inspired?

[0:20:28.3] LL: No. Not really. Not at all.

[0:20:30.5] LW: Then what was driving you?

[0:20:32.4] LL: Something beyond my conscious mind. What was driving me was to live a beautiful life. What was driving me was to connect with the world. What was driving me was a desire to travel.

[0:20:50.2] LW: Did the pain stop, or did it shift into a manageable way after you left the brokerage firm?

[0:20:58.5] LL: Yeah, I don't think it stopped. There were moments when I was traveling, when I was on my adventures, when I wasn't in pain. You have to come home. You have to come back to reality at times. Unless, you create a life that is just beyond your wildest dreams, which

is something we all continue to work on. No, I don't think the pain disappeared, but it got much better. There's no doubt about that.

[0:21:21.6] LW: Take us through you quit the job and then now you're off the beaten path, you're in your tunnel moment, or maybe you're even in the tunnel in the pain and now you've turned the light on inside, and so you can see a little bit, "Okay, this is my path." What happens next? You've seen the movie, you've quit the job, you've potentially cut yourself off from inheriting whatever from your family. What happens next?

[0:21:52.0] LL: Well, I had a friend who was in the TV world and he was not very high up in the TV world, but he was a director, he had some contacts. I said to him, "I want to do a show." Bear in mind, I'd never done anything like this. I want to do a show where I walk across America relying on the kindness of strangers. He looked at me like I was a nutjob and said, "How on earth are you going to do that?" I said, "I don't know. Let's just do it." He's like, "All right." I went to Times Square and I hitchhiked from Times Square to the Hollywood sign with basically no money, relying entirely on the kindness of strangers.

[0:22:30.3] LW: Why America as opposed to Europe?

[0:22:33.8] LL: Well, I had actually done a test run in England, but America because I grew up in in watching American movies, watching American TV shows, The 18 Dallas. There was something about America. America was a beacon of hope, a beacon of light. It was free. You felt a sense of freedom. I wanted to do it in America. I always wanted to do a road trip in America, so that's why.

[0:23:00.0] LW: What was the test run like if you could just talk a little bit about that?

[0:23:03.5] LL: Yeah, it was interesting. We started in London and we did all the way up to Scotland and back down to London. It was amazing. I met some just incredible people. I met some not incredible people too, but that's fine. That's part of life. It was something that really opened my eyes. It opened my heart. It opened so many more avenues for me to live in a different way.

[0:23:36.5] LW: Did you have to read Google hitchhiking? Or how did you know how to hitchhike, and so that you could work out those kinks in the test run?

[0:23:45.6] LL: I just went to London and started from London and headed north. That was it.

[0:23:50.9] LW: Where did you catch your first ride?

[0:23:54.1] LL: I used to live in Queens Way. I walked out of my apartment and walked across the Hyde Park and ended up finding a bus company that would be willing to let me go to Cambridge, if my memory serves me correct, for free.

[0:24:10.1] LW: Were you comfortable asking people for free stuff at the time? Or is that something you had to offer common and get used to?

[0:24:18.2] LL: Well, I couldn't accept money, so you couldn't give me money. It was difficult to ask people. When you have no choice, because I contrived the situation where I have no choice, you have no choice. You better get someone to help you or you're going to be in a bit of a pickle.

[0:24:34.0] LW: Right. Because you growing up as a loner and all of that, it doesn't sound like you were very much of a people person. But you would be the type of person to go up to someone and strike up a conversation and talk about the things that you talk about on your show and make people laugh and then ask them for something. That takes a lot of confidence and a lot of gall and a lot of – just a lot of things that people like – the way you described yourself as a kid, you don't have. I'm just curious where that even comes from. Is it just from the decision to do it, or is there something else?

[0:25:09.2] LL: It's really, it's possibly the decision to do it. I mean, I'm actually an introvert. You know me. You know me. You know me away from the camera. I'm very quiet. I don't really speak that much. Then you see me on camera and you're like, “Whoa! What the hell happened?” Right? It's because –

[0:25:30.4] LW: They can't shut you up. Yeah.

[0:25:31.7] LL: Yeah, exactly. Generally, I'm introverted. I used to be very, very shy. My parents would throw parties and I would go up to my room and just sit there for hours whilst the party was going on.

[0:25:45.0] LW: You said we did a test run. The guy, your friend was filming this, the test run?

[0:25:50.9] LL: Yes. Yes. Yes. He was filming it.

[0:25:53.7] LW: Just you and him?

[0:25:55.1] LL: Well, no. At that stage, we had him, one of the cameraman and someone else. There were four of us.

[0:26:01.5] LW: You and him hatched the plan like, "This is how we're going to do it. You're going to go ask someone. I'm going to stand back and film you asking and then we're both going to get in the car together. We're going to make sure it's okay." Is that how it went down?

[0:26:16.0] LL: Look, basically I said, "Let's do this." They said to me, "You're insane. It's not going to work." I said, "All right, let's what happens." I went off to people and just started talking to them.

[0:26:27.7] LW: It was you guys had a little makeshift teaser show out of that experience, I'm assuming?

[0:26:33.5] LL: Yeah. Yeah. We got very lucky. I mean, we try to sell it. People were like, "Oh, kindness doesn't sell. Kindness doesn't sell." Okay. At the last minute, the National Geographic International bought it, which was quite extraordinary. That was it. We were very, very lucky.

[0:26:53.7] LW: What did you learn from the test that you implemented in the actual cross-country America trip?

[0:27:00.1] LL: That it could be done? I mean, literally that it could be done.

[0:27:05.6] LW: There's nothing that you did that you felt, "Oh, you know what? We need to do this differently when we do it in America for the real thing?"

[0:27:10.2] LL: Not really. Not really. No. Just go up to people, talk to them, connect with them, find something in common, tell them this crazy adventure. A lot of them will try and help. Some of them won't. A lot of them will.

[0:27:22.3] LW: Did you tell your family about this at all at the time?

[0:27:25.5] LL: Yeah. Yeah. No, I told them. They thought it was a bit strange, but I understand that. But here we are 15 years later and it's not very strange anymore.

[0:27:46.9] LW: How are you funding yourself during that time?

[0:27:50.3] LL: Well, when I left the brokerage firm I did not leave penniless. Leave it at that.

[0:27:58.2] LW: Okay. All right, so you do the cross-country trip in America. That was 15 years ago. You wrote a book about it, right?

[0:28:07.8] LL: I did amazing adventures of a nobody.

[0:28:12.7] LW: Did you write the book yourself?

[0:28:15.0] LL: Yes. Yes. I wrote the book myself. I mean, I had editing help, but I wrote the book myself.

[0:28:19.3] LW: Did you have any idea that you were going to do something else after all of that, or what was the process that led to Kindness Diaries?

[0:28:26.5] LL: Yeah. I mean, I did. I thought to myself up, I've got a show on National Geographic. I'm going to arrive in Hollywood. I'm going to go to the agents. They're going to be like, "Oh, my God. We love you. Let's sign you." They're going to send me out to all the TV

channels and all the TV channels are going to be like, "Oh, my God. We love you. Here's a new show." None of that happened.

I went to the agents and they were like, "Well, we don't really think you're very good." Therefore, I couldn't get to selling the show. Nothing happened. My legend status never happened. I ended up working behind a desk again for quite some time.

[0:29:01.5] LW: What was the feedback? Why didn't they think you were good?

[0:29:04.5] LL: That's a good question. I don't know. They never actually told me. I mean, I think it was the first show we'd ever done in Hollywood. You may come to Hollywood thinking that you're going to be good, but there's hundreds of people that are better and they've been doing it for years. It was just very difficult to get anyone to listen to me. I mean, no one did. I had a few agents, a few managers, but they were just useless.

[0:29:32.8] LW: Now you set up a production company, you and this guy, correct?

[0:29:37.8] LL: No, just me. Just me.

[0:29:39.6] LW: Just you. What are you producing?

[0:29:43.1] LL: We're producing travel shows, we're distributing TV, stuff like that. It wasn't what I wanted to do. It was not what I wanted to do.

[0:29:52.3] LW: What was your mental state at that moment in time? You've broken away, now you explored the hitchhiking thing. How are you feeling about yourself, about your life, about your future?

[0:30:05.5] LL: Look, on some level, I was living in Hollywood. I was living the dream. I felt there was so much more. There was so much more to do. I mean, I was living, let's call it it wasn't a selfless dream. It was a dream for me and there was no shows, there were no books. There was a few, but it wasn't about touching lives. It was just bathing my own dream. That became stale after a while. I realized there was a lot more to it than just living my dreams. If I

was living my dream but other people weren't benefiting from it, then it really wasn't a dream at all.

[0:30:38.9] LW: Did you have any mentors around this time? Anyone who you –

[0:30:41.4] LL: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[0:30:42.6] LW: - who's guiding you? Who were some of your mentors?

[0:30:46.3] LL: I had a guy called Ted that was a bit of a genius in his own way. Still talk to him. I had therapists, life coaches, lots of people that helped me be the person I am today. Without them, I wouldn't be the person I am for sure.

[0:31:02.0] LW: How did that journey evolve into the next project?

[0:31:07.7] LL: I did a couple of other shows. I walked from the Eiffel Tower to Red Square in Moscow. I did a show for MTV. I wrote a few books.

[0:31:16.0] LW: Wait, I didn't hear about this. You walked from the Eiffel Tower to the Red Square in Moscow? Did a show?

[0:31:22.7] LL: Yeah. That was season three of Amazing Adventures of a Nobody.

[0:31:26.7] LW: You didn't want it you don't want to hitchhike anymore. You switched over to walking?

[0:31:30.9] LL: Well, I walked and hitchhiked. Hitchhiked. I started by walking. If when I could hitchhike, I did. When I walked, I would.

[0:31:56.6] LW: You've done this three or four times now at this point. You've done it a little bit in the UK, done it in America, you've now done it throughout Europe, right?

[0:32:05.4] LL: Yes.

[0:32:06.0] LW: You said that was season three. What was season two?

[0:32:08.4] LL: America. Season one was England.

[0:32:10.8] LW: Okay. That you're feeling like this is just normal for you now at this point?

[0:32:15.7] LL: Yeah. I mean, you can literally tell me to go anywhere in the world and give me a challenge. Say, "Within half an hour, I want you to be invited into someone's house. I'm telling you within 15 minutes, within 10 minutes, I want you to be invited into some stranger's house." I'll be like, "Fine. All right." Within 10 minutes, someone will invite me into their house.

[0:32:38.5] LW: Is there a formula for making that, for inspiring someone to invite you into their house? What are the steps? Say someone else wanted to run that experiment, can it be replicated by following a certain formula?

[0:32:52.0] LL: The formula is connection. Find a way to connect with someone and have a story. If you do those two things, not everyone says yes. Of course, of course, most people say no. You will always find that one person. They'll be like, "Oh, okay. Yeah, why not? Come on then."

[0:33:12.0] LW: Now you talked about in the Kindness Diaries, which we'll get to in a moment, you talked about learning about the importance of having a story from a very unlikely character. Do you know what that is?

[0:33:26.4] LL: I remember Dom and Dominica Fox. How on earth can I forget that? Basically, I was in Times Square for the first trip across America and I was having a serious problem. No one was helping me. No one. I started chatting with this African-American chap and what I thought was his girlfriend. The guy said to me, he said, "Look." I told him, "Look, I keep failing." He said, "Look, you need to have a story. Everyone needs to have a story. That's why you're not being helped." I never forgot that. I used –

[0:33:59.5] LW: You said you've done this three times before, so obviously you knew –

[0:34:03.3] LL: No, no, no, no, no. No, no. America was the second time.

[0:34:07.5] LW: Okay. That happened during you second trip.

[0:34:10.5] LL: Exactly, in America.

[0:34:12.5] LW: Got it.

[0:34:12.5] LL: Maybe it was different. Maybe my tricks or whatever you want to call them, weren't working in America, but they worked in England, because I got their psychology, but I didn't get the psychology of the Americans. It turns out that he was a pimp and that she was working very closely with him. Let's leave it at that.

[0:34:31.6] LW: You had approached him about asking for help. Then he told you, "Hey, man. You don't have a story. I can't help you."

[0:34:36.9] LL: Basically. Yes. He ended up helping me and they wanted to come to the Hollywood sign with me. I was like, "Look, guys. Sorry, you can't come to the Hollywood sign."

[0:34:47.9] LW: Right. Okay. You connect with someone, which means you see them, right? You acknowledge them in some way?

[0:34:56.8] LL: Yes. You acknowledge them, you make them feel at ease, you connect with them, you tell them a story. Then you say, "Can I stay in your house?" They're like, "No, you can't." Or they say yes.

[0:35:17.3] LW: In the times that it failed, you were getting rejected even though you were following the formula. Would you chalk that up to just you didn't follow the formula well enough, or people are just a little bit too afraid?

[0:35:29.1] LL: No. However how much – whatever formula you use, if you're on the street and you're asking a random person to stay in their house, the chances are they're going to say no.

After a while, you'll find someone that says yes. That's another part of the formula. Just keep on going. Just never give up.

[0:35:45.7] LW: Don't stop. Okay.

[0:35:47.0] LL: No. Just keep going.

[0:35:49.0] LW: All right. Let's talk about your Kindness Diaries, which ended up being season 1 on Netflix which is you and kindness 1. What was the genesis of that experiment? Take us through the mentality, the psychology behind that bigness of the project.

[0:36:10.1] LL: Yeah. I mean, that was something that was just – I do understand how on earth we had the courage and the bravery to do that, because that was insane. That was taking a vintage yellow motorbike with a sidecar. I think the bike was 30-years-old, something like that and driving it from LA, all the way around earth back to LA with no money, no food, no gas, no place to stay. I mean, it's completely insane.

[0:36:36.3] LW: Two oceans in between.

[0:36:38.5] LL: Yes. Two oceans in between. We did it.

[0:36:42.5] LW: Had you had some personal development course before that that helped you to understand that if you thought that big, that you could do something like that, or maybe you had to pick an impossible task? What led to that idea?

[0:36:57.4] LL: It was really frustration on some level. Because again, I've been working in Hollywood and people weren't paying any attention, which is fine. That's Hollywood. You know this. There's so many people that are vying for other people's attention. Most of the time, you don't get it. I couldn't get any shows. Nothing was happening. Then one day, the PG-13 version of what I said was, "I can't do this anymore. I have to do this myself." Yeah.

I came up with this idea and I just said, "Let's do it." It was insane. One of one of the examples of insanity is we were told that when you get to Thailand and Vietnam, they will not allow the bike in. We were like, "Ah, forget it. Let's deal with that when we get to Vietnam and Thailand."

[0:37:48.5] LW: You were told at the beginning, at the very beginning.

[0:37:50.5] LL: Yes. Yes. We arrive in Thailand and we spend hours trying to get the bike through. We manage to get it through, yeah. We managed to get it through into Cambodia by some fluke. Then we arrive in Vietnam, and by this time we've forgotten that we were told that you can't take the bike in. We arrive in Vietnam and they say, "You can't have the bike. The bike can't come through." We just have like, "Whoa. What the hell? What the hell are we going to do?" This isn't LA to Vietnam. It's LA around the world back to LA. We found a way. We found away, because we just didn't give up. We're like, "No, we're not giving up." At the end of the day, the American ambassador got involved in getting the bike into Vietnam and out to Vietnam into Canada.

[0:38:37.1] LW: That's incredible.

Let's go back a little bit more though, okay. You have the idea, you have the idea I'm assuming for a bike with a little side carriage. Is that a part of this mental sketch in the very beginning?

[0:39:00.9] LL: Yes. Yes. Yes.

[0:39:01.6] LW: Where do you find a yellow vintage bike?

[0:39:09.3] LL: Las Vegas is where you find it. Can't remember how I found it, but I went, found it. I went to Vegas. I got on a plane, went to Vegas, bought the bike, without exaggeration, within one minute of giving the guy the cashier's check, the bike broke. I was like, "Okay, this is bad." He fixed it and I drove it back to LA and it broke 45 miles away from LA. I was like, "Well, this time I had money so it didn't matter. I could fix it." I was like, "How the hell am I going to do this? How on earth am I going to get across the world with no money on a bike that keeps breaking down?"

[0:39:50.5] LW: I feel like that became – the bike was character in the show and the fact that it broke down was the stock plot point in every episode. It wasn't a matter of if we was going to break down. It's how is it going to break down? Where is this guy going to be when it breaks down and what's he going to do to fix it?

[0:40:08.8] LL: That's why I did it. Have you ever seen Chitty Chitty Bang Bang?

[0:40:12.6] LW: No, but I know I'm familiar with it. Dick Van Dyke, right?

[0:40:15.0] LL: Yeah. Yeah. It's about a car that flies. I grew up with that movie and it was amazing. I've seen it hundreds of times. I created kindness one as a character in the show. I remember once, I was at a party in the Hollywood Hills and I go up and the guy looks at me and the bouncer looks at me and he says, "Oh, my God. You're the captain of kindness one." I was like, "Yeah. I'm the captain of kindness one."

[0:40:39.6] LW: That's who you are. Right. That's your fame. You get the bike back, you guys have a production, a schedule we're going to start on this day, we're going to take – how long do you think it was going to take in the planning stages?

[0:40:53.3] LL: About six months. It ended up taking five and a half months.

[0:40:58.2] LW: Okay. How does one prepare for that, for a trip? Because that's different from your hitchhiking and walking across Europe. How do you mentally prepare yourself for this and for having to ask for gas money and all the things that you're going to need along the way?

[0:41:16.1] LL: To be honest, the way I prepared was not to think about it. I only thought about what I really needed to think about. For example, we needed to cross the oceans for free. We called up lots of ocean container ship carriers and we found one person, one company that was willing to help us. I had to pre-plan that. The planning of what I was about to do, I didn't plan it because it was just so anxiety-producing that there was no point in planning it. I just left on them on that morning and I was like, "Okay, this is it."

[0:41:48.6] LW: You're also not just planning for you. You're planning for a whole crew of people who were going to be following you and recording you.

[0:41:56.1] LL: Yeah. That part, they would do. I was really involved in the planning of that. They would plan that. I was involved in my own planning. Yes, sometimes they would say to me, "Look, there's a dangerous region here. We can't go there." I'm like, "Okay. No worries. We won't go there." They were in charge of that. I wasn't in charge of finding them hotels and stuff like that.

[0:42:15.1] LW: Right. Now the other thing is I noticed that with your show and this probably was done just for entertainment value, you would always go to the major tourist areas, which one would think if you're looking for someone to be kind and to offer you place to stay, you wouldn't go to one of those areas. You'd go to some other local area. Was that something that was a deliberate thing, or how did you actually plan the routes?

[0:42:51.1] LL: I guess, I just went to the places where there were lots of people. If I was in New York, I'd start in Times Square. If I was in Istanbul, I'd go to [inaudible 0:42:59.9]. If I was in a place where there were no people, then I'd go to the main square. I would always gravitate to the place where there were the most people and go out from there.

[0:43:09.0] LW: What was the ratio like of converting someone into a kindness, expressing, someone has to help you with the place to stay or some food to eat? How many people would you have to ask to get to that person?

[0:43:25.9] LL: If I asked 10 people, nine would say no.

[0:43:28.4] LW: Was that a pretty constant thing around the world? Or is it more in certain countries?

[0:43:33.7] LL: Pretty much. It's not because they were mean, some of them may be, one kind, but it was because they had families, they didn't feel safe. They were like, "Who's this weirdo?" Whatever it was. It would take about 10 times to get one person to say yes. It's fine. They would say yes and then the magic would happen.

[0:43:52.5] LW: During the trip, are you in a different mental state? Because you're now in it, you're living the staying, you're basically the real-life manifestation of Che Guevara? How are you feeling inside?

[0:44:04.6] LL: Look, it's a crazy adventure. It's not easy. It's very, very difficult. Every single day, you don't know where you're going to sleep, you don't know what you're going to eat, you don't know if the cars are going to – well, the bike is going to blow up. I mean, yes you have these amazing moments, but it's a tough journey, but it's worth it. It's worth it more so for me, because people get to watch the show and hopefully, they get inspired, and hopefully, they'd be –

[0:44:32.2] LW: You didn't know there was going to be a show at that point, right? You were hoping there was going to be a show.

[0:44:36.4] LL: Yeah. No, I didn't. I hoped there'd be a show. I knew that there was – there was no way I was going to let there not be a show. Even if it meant I had to give it away for free. The whole point was to get people to watch it and to be touched by it.

[0:44:54.2] LW: Was it completely self-financed, or do you have sponsorships and things like that?

[0:44:58.1] LL: Season one was self-financed. Season two was not self-financed.

[0:45:02.1] LW: All right. Then you get back six months later. You make it back to Los Angeles, drive up your driveway, park your bike, kindness one in the garage, I think which is where I think I saw it I sin the garage. What happens next? What's that like?

[0:45:21.1] LL: Well man, you know this better than most. That is that when you go on an amazing adventure and you come back to everyday life, it's an adjustment. You've been on the road, you've experienced magnificence, you've seen –

[0:45:33.7] LW: You've literally seen the world, yeah, and humanity.

[0:45:37.1] LL: Yeah, and then you come back. You're like, "Well, now what am I going to do?" It's sometimes depressing.

[0:45:46.1] LW: Because you had no plans, right? For after your trip, you're back now. Obviously, you're in post-production. Mentally, I know you – There's something that happened with your dog, there's something that happened with your girlfriend. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[0:46:01.4] LL: Sure. Well, my girlfriend left me and my dog unfortunately died. That was sad. I was more sad about my dog dying, to be honest with you. Yeah. I don't know. Have you ever had a dog?

[0:46:15.8] LW: I have dated girls who had dogs that I've gotten very close to. I never owned one myself.

[0:46:21.0] LL: You know. It's like, there's a connection that you have with these animals that is so heart-centered.

[0:46:27.9] LW: A 100%. When I broken up, the thing that I miss the most were the dogs. I would think about the dogs every day.

[0:46:37.5] LL: Yeah, I get it. It touches your heart in a very special way.

[0:46:44.9] LW: Did you find yourself slipping back into that darker state?

[0:46:50.4] LL: A little bit. Not nowhere near what it was, but there were moments. I mean, there were definitely – there were some moments actually that were not pleasant. It's interesting, man. Sometimes I feel not shy to share my pain, because everyone has pain, but then there were many people, there were many people who will say to you, "Oh, you have everything in the world. Don't be so," what's the words?

[0:47:16.5] LW: Down on yourself, or down on life?

[0:47:18.3] LL: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

[0:47:20.7] LW: Is it hard to relate to people after a trip like that and to do normal stuff like, go to the grocery store, or use a phone again?

[0:47:30.0] LL: Do you know what, Light? I'm going to ask you that question. Absolutely, I'll ask you that question, because you know this better than most. You've seen this, man. You've experienced this. You've been out in the world. You've had to come back every day, every time. You know the answer to that question.

[0:47:45.0] LW: I mean, that's a life changing adventure to have to come back from. I can only equate it to maybe going to the moon or something like that and then come back. Then you're walking down the aisle in the drugstore or something like that and you're just thinking, "Wow, this is so bizarre." I have to say, I do feel like that, because I'm traveling now around the world a lot and doing normal things is difficult.

One thing about you though that I haven't quite gone that far is you now have a flip phone, or you have some old phone. Talk a little bit about the process of moving away from the smartphone and into back to the old-school Nokia, or whatever it is.

[0:48:28.5] LL: Well, we live in a world that is consumed by feelings of being disconnected, because we all have these phones. I do my best to stay disconnected, because our phones take us away from our humanity. Yes, they do some marvelous things as well. I will go out with my flip phone and I will not be consumed by looking at my Instagram. I will not be consumed by looking at my Facebook.

It doesn't mean there aren't times when I am consumed by the Internet. Of course, there are. I'm just exactly like you and exactly like the people that are listening to you, to us today. Try turning your phone off. Next time when you go out, leave your phone at home and go and have dinner. By the time you come back, you'll feel so much fresher.

[0:49:21.0] LW: It's like a mini journey doing that for a lot of people these days.

[0:49:24.3] LL: Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

[0:49:25.6] LW: We're so tethered to our phones.

You came back, then you started giving speeches and talks and you started – you wrote another book. You wrote two more books, actually. *Go Be Kind* and then the one before that, which was to travel – what was that one called again?

[0:49:50.1] LL: *The Kindness Diary*. Oh, *Live, Love, Explore*.

[0:49:52.6] LW: *Love, Love, Explore*. You've become the kindness guy. That's a lot of people probably know you as the kindness guy. You got to show on Netflix, right? Then you began to plot your next adventure, which became season two of the Kindness Diaries.

[0:50:12.7] LL: Yes, indeed. Indeed it did. Season two, I drove a 50-year-old beetle from Alaska in the middle of winter to the bottom of the earth in Argentina in a place called Ushuaia. I remember being in Alaska in minus 30 in a 50-year-old beetle with no heating. I was literally, again, this is the PG-13 version of what I was saying to myself. I was like, “Why are you doing this to yourself? Again, please.” The answer that kept coming back was like, “You're doing this, because people are going to watch the show. People are going to be inspired. People are going to listen to your speeches. People are going to take what you've done and do something similar themselves. That's why you're doing it.” I couldn't argue with that. I was like, “Fine, fine. Okay, keep going.”

[0:50:58.4] LW: Do you have a story of someone who's done something that was inspired by one of your journeys? Like something pretty on a large scale like that?

[0:51:06.8] LL: Yeah. I mean, there was this one guy that watched the show and started a charity. He was going around America, giving free – He would make – do people's lawns. It's just one of the things. He was on TV and he's – one day, someone sent it to me and said, “Look, have you seen this?” I'm like, “No.” He's like, “You should watch him.” I'm like, “Why? Some guy doing someone's lawns?” Yeah, but watch it and listen to why he's doing someone's lawns. I was like, “All right.”

I watch it and the guy says, “Oh, I watched the Kindness Diaries and I was inspired, so I wanted to do something to help make the world a better place.” I mean, I had a flashback to freezing my ass off in Alaska. I was like, “There you go. There you go. That's why I did this.”

[0:51:49.5] LW: How is the jig not up? I mean, people now have seen this. Now you're doing this trip in season two going from Alaska. Haven't people seeing you on Netflix, or heard about you, or –

[0:51:59.6] LL: Some of them have. Some of them have.

[0:52:02.6] LW: Did it make it easier to people to help you?

[0:52:04.9] LL: Not really. Not really, because most of them hadn't seen it, to be honest.

[0:52:09.2] LW: Really. They don't just go pull out their phones and just search your name when you say, “Hey, can I stay at your place?” I mean, that's what I would do.

[0:52:15.9] LL: I don't tell them who I am.

[0:52:17.2] LW: What do you say?

[0:52:18.3] LL: I don't say, “Oh, I'm on the Kindness Diaries.” We'll say, “Look, we're doing a show. I'm traveling around the world rely on kindness. Can you help?” Look, there are some times when I'm so desperate, right? Then I'll be like, “Just, here you go. Look at your phone. Just take your phone out and look at me. Please. Give me a place to stay.” Nine times out of 10, we just don't go down that road. There's no point, because then it becomes not real. You know, there's a twist at the end of each episode where we give back. If they know who I am, they're going to be kind to me. They'll think, “Maybe I'm going to get something.”

[0:52:58.7] LW: Speaking of which, you've given out all of these gifts now and helping people realize their dreams, how many times have you done that? How many of those experiences

have you now participated in? Do you have a Excel spreadsheet with everybody's contact information? How do you keep up with all of that?

[0:53:15.2] LL: Well, there's two seasons, 13 episodes each season, so that's 26 episodes.

[0:53:20.9] LW: Those are just the ones on the shows. You've given more than that, I'm assuming and those are the best ones.

[0:53:27.1] LL: Yes. Yes. The majority of them were on the show, some of them weren't. It's around that number. That's how many people we've helped.

[0:53:40.4] LW: Have you been tracking the long-term effects of these gifts, or have they all continued to turn out pretty well? The interesting stories?

[0:53:49.9] LL: Some of them are tracked. Some of them I haven't. Yeah, was a episode 7, season 1, the rude rickshaw driver. He's now –

[0:53:57.9] LW: Love that one.

[0:53:59.0] LL: Yeah, what a legend. He's my friend. I mean, every time I go to Delhi, he comes in his switch-on and picks me up. He's moved houses to a bigger house. He set up a community of rickshaw drivers that help people. I mean, it's amazing.

[0:54:13.8] LW: Season 2 lasted for about the same amount of time? Three months? Four months?

[0:54:16.9] LL: No. Season 2 was three and a half months. It was less.

[0:54:21.5] LW: Okay. You've driven around the world, around the – was it called latitudal direction and the longitudinal – Are they correct?

[0:54:31.0] LL: I don't know what they're called, but I know what you mean.

[0:54:34.3] LW: What's next?

[0:54:37.2] LL: Well, the next thing –

[0:54:37.8] LW: I'm sure you've been thinking about that, if you can even say what's next.

[0:54:41.3] LL: Scotland to Singapore. I know it's the same, but it is what it is.

[0:54:46.3] LW: You're going to do a scooter? Or what's the vehicle going to be?

[0:54:50.4] LL: It's going to be a yellow submarine.

[0:54:52.0] LW: Are you serious?

[0:54:53.2] LL: No, I'm joking.

[0:54:56.7] LW: Okay. Can you announce what the vehicle is yet, or not really?

[0:55:00.4] LL: I don't know what it'll be. It may just be kindness too again, to be honest. Because kindness too, even though I kept breaking down, it didn't break down as much as kindness one.

[0:55:09.8] LW: What about Cape Town to Cairo? Anything like that in the works?

[0:55:14.1] LL: We've certainly thought about doing that. It's a bit dangerous, to be honest with you. We're not sure that that's very clever.

[0:55:22.9] LW: Okay. Well, we're winding up the conversation. There are people out here who have obviously are inspired by you, Leon, and your journey. What is something that you would say to someone who's listening to all of this and having their own Motorcycle Diaries moment in their life? What advice would you give to them?

[0:55:46.4] LL: Do your very best not to be 97-years-old on your deathbed, looking back at your life and not having lived.

[0:55:54.6] LW: Okay. What about someone who doesn't have a family business, maybe they don't have a lot of money at all and they are having that feeling and urge to do something bigger? What would you say to them?

[0:56:07.1] LL: I would say exactly the same thing. It'd be the same thing. It'd be go out and live. Go out and live your life. Go out and touch some hearts. Go out and be magnificent. Don't wake up at 65 and be happy, because you've left a job that you've hated for 45 years. What kind of a life is that? I'm not saying it's easy. It isn't. Embrace your pain, face your pain. Through your pain, you will find freedom.

It's not easy. There'll be times. The name of your podcast, people say, "Oh at the end of the tunnel is light." Okay. But most people walk through a tunnel and they never see the light and they give up. All they need to do is keep on walking.

[0:56:58.5] LW: Right. Beautiful. Well, thank you very much for joining the podcast, Leon. Thank you guys for listening.

[0:57:05.8] LL: No worries.

[0:57:08.6] LW: We will create links to all of your shows in the show notes. You're pretty active on social media. Is that you that's actually posting and stuff on social media?

[0:57:19.1] LL: Yes. Yes, yes.

[0:57:21.6] LW: Okay. How can people find you on social media?

[0:57:25.0] LL: @TheKindnessGuy on Facebook and Instagram. @TheKindnessGuy.

[0:57:30.5] LW: Okay. We'll put that in the show notes as well. Keep doing your thing, keep shining your light and we'll be following you along the journey.

[0:57:39.3] LL: Thank you so much for having me.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:57:41.5] LW: I hope Leon's amazing story inspired you to incorporate more kindness and genuine connection in your life and to truly see the people that you cross paths with each day. A big thank you to Leon for coming on the show and for opening up and talking about some of the more vulnerable aspects of life that people don't often get asked in these podcast interviews.

One of my goals with starting At The End Of The Tunnel was to show how even the people who do big things are facing many of the same mental and emotional challenges that many of us are facing on a daily basis. If they can potentially heal themselves through living a more purposeful life, then so can we.

To hear more stories like Leon's, make sure you're subscribed to At The End Of The Tunnel. To keep us searchable for others, please rate and review the podcast if you haven't already. You can also find links to everything Leon and I discussed in the show notes below and I can't wait to share more inspirational interviews with you. Also, please make sure you stay tuned. New episodes will come out each week.

Thanks again for listening.

[END]