

**EPISODE 40**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:03] SS:** My mother started hemorrhaging and I was alone in the house with her. She told me what to do. I called an ambulance. I called my father's mother, which my mother had told me to do. Said, "You have to come get me, or somebody has to come take care of me." My mother was taken away in an ambulance and given the cultural conditions at that time, I was not allowed to go see her in the hospital.

She died about two weeks later. I had never seen her again after that night. She went away by ambulance. Then I was suddenly living with my father's parents. My father had been totally out of my life since I was four. I barely knew them, so if you counted divorces, the first major disruption. This was now the second, where I was living with these new strangers.

**[00:01:08] LW:** Hello there At The End Of The Tunnel, listeners. It's your host, Light Watkins. This week on the podcast, I'm honored to have as my guest one of the most prominent teachers in the meditation community, Sharon Salzberg.

For those of you who don't know, Sharon is one of the original Buddhist meditators who helped to introduce meditation to mainstream America back in the 1970s, along with Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and of course, Ram Dass. I've been a huge fan of hers for a very long time. In fact, she and Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein just celebrated their 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary as co-founders of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts.

Sharon also just released her 11<sup>th</sup> book, which is called *Real Change* back in October, and it's wonderful. Sharon is a New York Times bestselling author. She's a world-renowned meditation teacher. She's host of the Metta Hour Podcast, which has over 3 million downloads. She also recently celebrated her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a daily meditator. 50 years. That's just incredible.

What's most remarkable to me about Sharon's story is how she started out, which is probably the furthest one could be from a future meditation guru. According to the Indian teacher, Dipa Ma, who requested that Sharon started teaching in the first place, Sharon possessed the most ideal qualification for becoming an effective meditation teacher. To Sharon's surprise, it wasn't her wealth of spiritual knowledge. It wasn't her proximity to some of the other most dedicated spiritual teachers in the world. It was simply the fact that Sharon understood suffering.

You see, before the age of 16, Sharon had experienced five family configurations that each had been altered by death or trauma, including the untimely death of her mother at age nine. Little did Sharon know, her quest for answers would lead her literally to the other side of the world, taking part in strange rituals that would give her her first taste of inner peace and a lifelong camaraderie with a handful of Westerners who would go on to become the central figures of the Western Meditation Movement, the modern day transcendentalists.

Anyway, I'm excited for you to hear Sharon's backstory in her own words. I think it's going to inspire you to see your own trajectory, however unpredictable it's been, as perfect for whatever gifts that you are meant to bring into this world. Without further ado, I introduce you to the incomparable Sharon Salzberg.

[EPISODE]

**[00:03:50] LW:** Sharon, thanks so much for coming on to At The End Of The Tunnel. I'm honored to have you. I followed your work for a long time. We crossed paths several years ago at Wanderlust in Hollywood. You were facilitating a workshop there. That was a really exciting moment for me.

I have a lot of questions about your life. I want to fill in some of the gaps. As a proponent of meditation, so having an understanding of how things work in that world, and also just as someone who's out in the world and navigating the world and trying to be relatable and all of those things. My first question for you, though, is what is your meditation practice like these days, in terms of what's your ritual? Do you wake up first thing in the morning and meditate?

Do you have tea first? Is it an all-day thing, where you just sit whenever you feel the need to? You've been doing this for a very long time now, decades. What is it like today?

**[00:04:46] SS:** I have been doing it for a very long time. First of all, thank you so much for having me on. It's wonderful to talk to you. I just celebrated an awesome anniversary. I realized; I've been practicing for 50 years.

I first did a retreat in India. It's how I learned how to meditate. Began January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1971. It was like, "Oh, wow." It's outrageous to think about. It's just dream-like. It's such a dream. I still practice every day. It's interesting in pandemic times, where I'm not traveling at all. I'm not going out and seeing people at all. So many. I see my practice is really conforming to what is the classical description, or delineation. There's the formal period of practice, where you may be sitting, you may be walking, you may be lying down, whatever posture, but it's just a period of dedication for these 10 minutes or 20 minutes or an hour.

My goal is to deepen awareness and compassion, not figure out my strategic plan, or something like – that may come up, but that's not the intention. Then there's what we call "short moments many times", which is just sprinkling some mindfulness into your life. Probably the most famous comes from Vietnamese Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh, has suggested, don't pick up your phone on the first ring. Let it ring three times and breathe, then you pick it up. The sound of the phone ringing is the signal. Okay, come back to yourself.

I find in these times, I'm doing both a lot more. I do try to sit in the morning. It's usually after caffeine, or some time to your coffee. I like having a period. I try to sit for, let's say, half an hour, maybe 40 minutes, but could be 20 minutes or so. Because of the current conditions of my life, I have so much more space and time to do the other. Every one thing I've noticed about myself in this time is that I've actually, I guess, made a resolve to be kinder, not even consciously, but I see that I'm rereading emails before pressing send. I'm just taking that time.

Then I think, "Well, could this be misinterpreted? This is a harsh form of communication to begin with. Maybe I better take that sentence out." I find that I'm practicing all through the day in different ways.

**[00:07:39] LW:** When you think back to little Sharon, your earliest memories, what was your favorite toy or activity?

**[00:07:46] SS:** When I was a little bit older, not a tiny little tot, but it was always reading. It was always, always reading, because that was my experience of the world, other than within the household. Definitely a lot of that. I remember also, raising little caterpillars in a box. They didn't, sadly, last long enough.

**[00:08:09] LW:** I want to talk about that, because you mentioned that in an interview before. You said, your favorite animal was the caterpillar, but not the butterfly. What was this fascination with caterpillars?

**[00:08:20] SS:** I don't remember exactly how it started, if it was some relative, or cousin, or something like that. I remember the box. I remember the dirt and effective prayers that this little being would survive, which did not. You can get the symbolism of it, and what it was all about change. It was all about, there's another world.

**[00:08:46] LW:** Were you an only child?

**[00:08:49] SS:** From the time I was nine, I was growing up with my grandparents, with my father's parents. Before then, there'd already been a tremendous disruption and loss in my household. I was the only child and it was always family dynamic, where these things are never really ever openly talked about. I also had a strong internal world that I kept checking in with, but it wasn't getting any confirmation from the external world. Yeah, the way you see things is true. That's really what happened. It was none of that. That was a big split there.

**[00:09:31] LW:** You had a tragedy with your mom. She was a big Nat King Cole fan, you've mentioned before. Does she have a favorite Nat King Cole song?

**[00:09:41] SS:** That, I don't remember, but she died when I was nine. My parents had gotten divorced when I was 4. My father disappeared for that time. I was living with my mother and her sister and brother. That time in the Bronx before when she died, I moved to Washington Heights. My memories are very like an image, without a lot of context. It's like, "Oh, right. I remember that."

**[00:10:12] LW:** Can you talk a little bit about that night you guys were watching that King Cole and how that affected you?

**[00:10:17] SS:** My mother started hemorrhaging. I was alone in the house with her. She told me what to do. I called an ambulance. I called my father's mother, which my mother told me to do. Said, "You have to come get me, or somebody has to come take care of me." My mother was taken away in an ambulance. Given cultural conditions at that time, I was not allowed to go see her in the hospital. She died about two weeks later. I had never seen her again after that night. She went away by ambulance.

Then I was suddenly living with my father's parents. My father had been totally out of my life since I was four. I barely knew them. That was, if you count the divorce is the first major disruption. This was now the second.

**[00:11:16] LW:** Did you have a spiritual, or some religious foundation, or you could process these disruptions?

**[00:11:24] SS:** My grandparents were immigrants from Poland. I think they have a certain cultural value that they believe the kindest thing was just not to bring up my mother's name again, which they didn't. That it would upset me too much. Would hurt me too much.

They were fairly observant Jews. I fell into the ritual of that. I wouldn't say I understood it, or why we couldn't turn on the lights on Saturday, or something like that. What I did have was a voice within. At some point, probably a little later than nine, which was very clear to me that there was another way of being, or there was another life waiting for me, or there was something else beyond the circumstances. I also intuited that studying and being really good at school was going to be a vehicle for that. In a way, I was biding my time.

**[00:12:32] LW:** Interesting. With the Dalai Lama there, he's recognized as a child and groomed to become this spiritual leader. I'm curious. This is just a hypothetical question. Let's say, three wise men came to you back then when you were a teenager, after having dealt with all of that and said, "Sharon, one day you will be one of a handful of people to introduce this really powerful Eastern practice to mainstream America and your work will affect millions of people and help them to find inner peace and happiness within." What would 14 or 15-year-old Sharon have thought about that prediction?

**[00:13:14] SS:** I would have thought it was ridiculous. Not only that. It sounds like, you've read my book, *Faith*, to know these details of my life. When my own teacher, this woman named Dipa Ma told me to teach, which was 1974, I'd been in India at that point for a number of years. I was coming back to the states for what I thought was a very brief visit back before I went back to India for the entire rest of my life.

I went to Calcutta to see her, just to say goodbye and get her blessing for my very, very brief journey back to the States. She said, "When you go back, you'll be teaching." I said, "No, I won't." She said, "Yes, you will." I said, "No, I won't." I thought it was ludicrous that I could do things like that. She kept saying, "Yes, you will." I kept saying, "No, I won't. I'm coming right back."

Then she said two things that were really remarkable, which really set the path for the rest of my life. One was, "You really understand suffering. That's why you should teach." Which looking back, was an extraordinary thing to say. First of all, she herself as a human being, as a woman, has suffered tremendously in life, loss of two of her children, lost her husband, whom

she loved very much. It was through that pain, actually, that she sought meditation and found some way of almost metabolizing suffering into compassion.

She was an extraordinary person, extraordinary teacher. Hearing that from her meant something. I thought at one point, I thought, "Oh, it's funny. She didn't say your realization is so awesome, where you're your scholarship is so erudite." It was like, "You really understand suffering. That's why you should teach," which is an interesting reflection on the challenges of our lives and strengths that may also give us.

Then she said to me, way back in 1974, she said, "You can do anything you want to do. If you're thinking you can't do it, that's what's going to stop you." I left her room, which was on the fourth floor of this building. I went down the stairs thinking the whole time, "No, I won't. I'm not going to do that."

I will say also, when I did start teaching, because of course, she was right and I was wrong. With Joseph Goldstein, and Jack Kornfield and other friends. I don't think one of us have the vision that you just described as. None of us have, "Let's start a movement." It was like, these methods, these techniques have helped each of us so much personally. We have the blessing. We have the authorization, you could say, to pass it on from our own teachers and a great encouragement for teachers to pass it on. Let's see if anyone here is interested. Let's try this one retreat. Let's do this. Let's do that. It was always one step at a time. We made plenty of mistakes. Nowadays, people often say, "Wow, you must have had such vision." I think, "Well, not really."

**[00:16:49] LW:** That's one of my objectives with telling these stories is showing people, when you look at the details of someone's trajectory, there are some embers in childhood perhaps. Obviously, you're too young to be able to understand what that is. Then these little course correction things happen. As you describe them, their family configurations that have been altered by death. You had five of those, which then catapulted you, you find yourself in college at 16-years-old, college in Buffalo. That's where you happen to take this Asian philosophy class. Why did you take that class at that time?

**[00:17:38] SS:** Well, there were certain requirements. You needed a philosophy course, you needed a language course. You need these different things over the course of the four years. When I was a sophomore, I decided to fulfill the philosophy requirement. I just looked at the schedule and I thought, "Oh, there's an Asian philosophy course. That's on Tuesday. That's convenient. Let me do that one." Of course, it totally changed my life.

**[00:18:06] LW:** How were you thinking about success at that time?

**[00:18:10] SS:** I don't know if I thought that way. Honestly, at the age of 16, I was in some way – the immediacy of life like, what am I going to major in was very important. I was also reconciling my past in a way that I had never done before. Of those five family configurations, but it's my most 16 going to college. Ended like, one change was my parents' divorce. One change was my mother's death. Then I lived with my grandparents, then my grandfather died and my father came back. I was 11-years-old. I haven't seen him since he was four.

He was a wreck at that point, from alcohol and mental illness. Very different from I think the reality of having been before. I was four in the image I hold him all this time. He was only there for about six weeks in my grandma's house when he took an overdose of sleeping pills. He was taken away by ambulance as well, to a mental health facility. He stayed in some facility, VA hospital, or nursing home, or halfway house or something for the rest of his life, which was some decades.

My grandmother and other relative said, "Well, he had an accident. He took a sleeping pill. He didn't remember he'd taken the sleeping pill." He took another one, and there's too much, so he had to go to the hospital. That was when I was 11. It was only when I was in college, I started thinking, "That's a funny trigger to have you end up in a psychiatric hospital for now another eight years, or nine years, or something like that." I thought, "Ah." I was putting the pieces together of my life and trying to figure out who I was.



I mean, the miracle of that time is that I heard about meditation in that Asian philosophy class. I didn't think, "That sounds interesting. Maybe when I'm all grown up, I'll try it. Maybe, or I could never do it. That's for other people, which would be more likely." That'd be an interesting thing to maybe pursue in graduate school.

Other than that, it was so like, "I've got to learn how to do this. I think this could really help me." I was going to school in Buffalo. I looked around Buffalo, this is 1970. I just didn't see it anywhere. It was not to be found, at least by me. I created an independent study project. The American Studies Department had an independent study program. That settled what my major was going to be. I presented the project and I said, "Let's go to India and studying meditation." They said, "Okay."

**[00:21:12] LW:** Did you have to sell cookies, or raise money to go to India, or get somebody permission? What was the backstory of that?

**[00:21:20] SS:** It was my junior year of college, so I went with my student loans and scholarships. That was not a problem. Also, in those days, I think none of us flew. We all flew to Europe and went overland. Some one way or another, like train and bus.

**[00:21:40] LW:** I know your parents were not in the scene. Maybe you're still in touch with the grandparents. Would you have talked to someone about that? Maybe they push back, "Oh, I don't know. India is a really strange," and you had to overcome that? Or were you just out there on your own, just, "I'm doing whatever I want to do. It doesn't matter what anybody thinks about it."

**[00:21:56] SS:** Yeah. I told them. They were very worried. Of course, this was a long time ago. Yeah. Well, there were no cellphones, there was no internet. There were not any faxes. It's like, if you wanted to make an international call from India, first, you had to go to a big city, which have the facility for that, usually check into some International Hotel, book a trunk call for 24 hours, hence. Go to some place in a booth and scream. It is a very big deal. It is a very big deal.

Even, people often say, because it's unbelievable, two generations younger than mine that we had no internet. It'd be like, "How did you find out where the port of the great new teacher was, or where that retreat was going to be?" Well, people told you. Everything was dependent on that communication.

**[00:23:00] LW:** Or eavesdropping in restaurants.

**[00:23:02] SS:** Exactly. That happened, as you know.

**[00:23:06] LW:** Okay. Before your trip, you meet this Obi Wan Kenobi figure, Trungpa Rinpoche in Buffalo. Talk about that experience.

**[00:23:17] SS:** I was going to the university. There were also other colleges in Buffalo. Trungpa Rinpoche was a Tibetan teacher, Tibetan Lama. Somehow, his first trip to North America, he got sent to Buffalo to speak at one of these other colleges. This is about four days before I was getting ready to leave India. This is a small group of friends and I will go in together. Some people doing things in education; people from Buffalo.

I was 18 at this point. I was very naïve. I'd never even been to California before and I was about to go to India. I had an idea that practices held within the Buddhist tradition, this is all from that ancient philosophy class that they took, would be very simple and direct. As they often talk about, you don't need to become a Buddhist, or join anything, or reject anything else. It's really about methods. That's what I was really aiming toward, but I had no idea where to go. I didn't know anything about India, where to find a teacher, or anything.

There was Trungpa Rinpoche, like a living embodiment of a Buddhist meditation teacher. They asked for written questions at his talk. I wrote out the question. My friends and I are about to leave for India in three or four days to study Buddhist meditation. Do you have any idea where we should go? This big pile of questions in front of him and he pulls out my question and read it out loud. Do you have any idea where we should go? Any recommendations?

He was silent for a moment. Then he said, "I think you had perhaps best follow the pretense of accident." That was it. No addresses. No handing a monastery guide book. "I think you had perhaps best follow the pretense of accident." That's exactly the way it worked out. I went to India. We started in Dharamshala, because I'd heard the Dalai Lama live there and heard he was a Buddhist. There were meditation classes, and they were wonderful teachers.

It was the situation where, you know what it's like when something just doesn't work. It's like, it just didn't work. I go to the meditation class. He told, "Oh, the translators, gone for a few weeks. Sorry, go back in two weeks." They say, "Oh, the teacher had to go to the dentist. She was in Calcutta on the other end of India. Come back in three weeks." It just wasn't working. I did overhear a conversation at a restaurant, saying that there was going to be an international Hatha Yoga conference in New Delhi. I thought, "Oh, that's it. I'll go there. That's where I'll find a teacher."

I went there and it was a completely – nearly completely dismal experience, where the low point was when these yogis and swamis were pushing and shoving against each other, to be the first to grab the microphone and speak. I thought, "Oh, great. This is hopeless." Also at that conference, a young man named Dan Goleman, who we tend to know these days is the author of emotional intelligence, all these years later. Dan was giving a talk at that conference. He was at the time a graduate student in psychology. He was studying meditation.

Somehow, he ended up giving a talk at this conference. He mentioned at the end of the talk, that he was on his way to this town called Bodh Gaya, in India, where there was going to be an intensive 10-day immersion course into meditation. It was very practical. You didn't have to join anything. You didn't have to reject anything else. It's exactly what I've been looking for. I thought, "Oh, that's it. That's what I need and it wasn't." Actually, many others followed after Dan to Bodh Gaya and joins in this course. That began January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1971.

**[00:27:55] LW:** What was your feeling of India being completely opposite of Buffalo, New York? I mean, because like you said, this is before a lot of conveniences. You're traveling around in cars 17 hours, you're on trains. You got Delhi belly stuff happening. I mean, you got

to watch out what you're eating and just all these people and animals and just all this stuff is – all this commotion is happening. Did you feel you were home when you were in India? Or were you tolerating it to get the knowledge that you came for?

**[00:28:26] SS:** I felt like I was home. I was also terrified. I mean, that was true too. I felt I was home. I mean, it took a while to get there. Because like I said, we took a plane to [inaudible 00:28:39] express train, which is days and days to get to Turkey. Then ferries and boats and buses and trains, and all the way through the middle east to get to Pakistan and then India. Somehow, as soon as I get to India, I just felt at home.

There was something also about the openness of it, after all the concealment of my earlier life. It's like, this is street life. I remember bringing in some of our Indian teachers from India to visit here in the States. It would get to be in certain – a lot of places. 8:00 at night or 9:00 at night and the teacher will say, “Where is everybody? The streets are empty. That’s so unnatural.” There was so much openness. Yeah, I felt quite at home there.

**[00:29:34] LW:** You're at this 10-day retreat, this is in Bodh Gaya and you meet Ram Dass as well, for the first time. What was your impression of him?

**[00:29:42] SS:** Well, the teacher of the retreat was S. N. Goenka. He had just left Burma pretty recently before then, to visit his mother who had been ill in Bombay. She got better and he began teaching. He was very new to teaching outside of Burma. Because Dan Goleman had inspired quite a number of people from that conference to go, this was a group of people. It was a real gathering. At that retreat, Ram Dass was a student there. He was attending as a student. He, of course, had been to India himself before. He was Ram Dass, not Richard Alpert. At that point, he came back to India after, I think, a couple of years in America. There was a group of people with him. They'd heard him on the radio. They encountered him somehow in the states and they were with him and really trying to meet his teacher, his guru.

He was old style. He was an old-style guru. He didn't exactly know where he was going to be next and appear and disappear and be somewhere else. He didn't know where he was, or who

the teacher was. You couldn't text everybody, or email everybody. It's like, "Hey, we spotted." They would try to do worthy things with their time. There's a whole group of them who are attending this course with Ram Dass. It was Ram Dass, Krishna Das, lots of people who were still good friends.

I look back, Ram Dass, he was like the patriarch who had been fired from Harvard. He'd already had a guru and a new name. Looking back, I realized, "Oh, he was 38 or 39-years-old. He seemed so old." He was really the patriarch. When we were there together practicing, that the first box, the first appearance of *Be Here Now*, his great book was not a book, it was a box. Everything was loose, the Chai recipes, and things like that.

I remember him getting the box. We all opened the box and we're looking at and ooing and I and looking at all the stuff. Everything felt very fresh. It was really very new and exciting. It's such a sense of community and such a sense of discovery. It's like, "Oh, look what my breath feels when I do this." Every little thing was so meaningful.

**[00:32:26] LW:** You were still relatively young at that time. You're 19, 20-years-old. If I were to speak with Dan or somebody who was around at that time, Krishna Das and say, "What were your reflections of Sharon at the time?" What would they have said?

**[00:32:38] SS:** She's very quiet. She's very sweet. Krishna Das and I teach together at Fairmount and we often tell the same story each from our own perspective, because Goenka taught many retreats in a row, maybe little gaps in between, and then being on other retreat. One of the gaps, Dan had gone to Allahabad, which is where it's the grounds of this huge gathering, the Kumbh Mela, which has this astrological points of every four years of this and we told him it was this. When it's the big one, it's millions and millions and millions of people who come together to bathe the Gangas.

**[00:33:28] LW:** The largest gathering of humans on Earth, they say.

**[00:33:31] SS:** Dan has gone there. Then it came back to Bodh Gaya and we were practicing. Then the Mela was over, but this group of people around Ram Dass, some people who had really wrapped those courses, because of Ram Dass, some people who met Ram Dass there, decided that they were going to get in this bus.

**[00:33:53] LW:** Oh, my God. You were there?

**[00:33:54] SS:** I was there. Sure.

**[00:33:55] LW:** On the bus?

**[00:33:56] SS:** No, no, no. I waved goodbye to the bus. That's why Krishna Das and I tell the story; same story from two different angles. They decided they were going to get in this bus and tour around, looking for Maharaja. They had no idea where he was.

Again, it wasn't like, a blog some rooms and going to right spot it in Banaras guru and [inaudible 00:34:22]. I remember deliberating internally, "Do I want to get on that bus?" I don't know. I've just discovered this practice. It's really important for me. They don't even know where the guy is. I'm just going to keep meditating here. When they left, Ram Dass was the only one with a name Ram Dass. They were Linda and Jeffrey. Somewhere as they tell the story, because now I'm not privy to it, they're on the bus and Dan Goleman wants to have the bus detour and see the grounds where the Kumbh Mela had been. It wasn't even there anymore. Ram Dass said, "No." He wanted to go right on to Delhi and they have this discussion.

Finally, Ram Dass said, "Okay. We'll go look at the grounds of the Mela." They got there and there was [inaudible 00:35:22] waiting for them by the side of the road. Apparently, he had woken up that morning and told this host, make lunch for, I don't know, let's say 28 people. There were exactly 28 people, including the bus driver. At one point I said to Krishna Das, "Well, how long did it take you to find him?" He said, "10 hours." His life choices is very interesting right there.

**[00:35:51] LW:** You had your first experience, I think it was the last day of the 10-day retreat, where S. N. Goenka talked about Mettaa. Talk about that. How that made you feel?

**[00:36:01] SS:** Yeah. Well, the main engine for that retreat and for many, many approaches to meditation is mindfulness, which is really a way of trying to get closer to your experience, having your awareness be less cluttered, less filled with old fears or future projections, so you can see much more accurately what your experience really is. Maybe it's pain, but it's not pain-plus. The anticipation of the next 50 years, not feeling any better. That was really the essential tool in that 10-day retreat.

Right at the end, almost as a ceremonial way of saying goodbye, Goenka introduced this other method, which is called Metta. Metta means loving kindness. It was one particular form, one way of doing it. There are many, many ways of doing it, but it was my first introduction. There, rather than trying to just get closer to the truth of your experience, whatever it is, you're actually actively offering goodwill and well wishes to yourself and to others.

Goenka considered a certain way through sensation in the body, because that was very much his approach with mindfulness is being aware. It's almost like, filling your body with the sense of warmth and caring, and then you offer it, ultimately, to all of life, including yourself.

I was just riveted. I thought, "Wow, what's this? I really want to learn this method." I mean, I studied it and I tried to understand it. Of course, it was Goenka times and he was doing it in that same way, right at the end of this mindfulness retreat. It was only in 1985 that I went to Burma and did a three-month intensive meditation retreat on loving kindness, on that particular technique. They taught it somewhat differently than Goenka done, but it's the same essence. It became hugely important for me in my practice. That was my intuition beforehand anyway. It's why I really wanted to learn it. That was '85. I came back. I started teaching it right away as a method. My first book was called loving kindness and that came out about 10 years later, because I'm very slow.

**[00:38:56] LW:** After Dipa Ma had ordained you a future teacher and you pushed back on that, you still are wandering around, linking up with Joseph in Colorado and staying in these houses with people and stuff like that. Can you just walk us through how you went from there to how you guys ended up starting the center in Barre?

**[00:39:19] SS:** Well, Dipa Ma in Calcutta in 1974, came back to the States. I was on the East Coast. I was with my family. I did the preparatory work for getting a new visa to go back to India forever and all that.

**[00:39:36] LW:** Did they think you were weird when you were back with your family?

**[00:39:39] SS:** Yeah. I mean, everyone was so glad to see me and they're so relieved. I also didn't have the other sophistication, or the language to really explain, like they said to me as they did, "Are you still Jewish?" I would say, "Yeah, of course." I didn't know how to describe what I've been doing. A group of us thought, "Oh." This is another whole Ram Dass story, but Joseph Goldstein, who was also at my first retreat, that's where we met, had come back to the States about six months before I did.

He was traveling across the country with some friends and he stopped in Boulder, Colorado. Boulder was the site where Trungpa Rinpoche, same Trungpa Rinpoche that had sent me off with the pretense of accident, no addresses, who was establishing this institute called Naropa. Naropa Institute. Now it's university, because it's gotten affiliated. Those days it was an institute and it was the first place I'd heard of, where there was meditation and textual study of Hinduism and Buddhism, and Tai Chi, martial arts, and so many things being offered.

This is prior to the official opening, which was in the summer. Joseph stopped there and asked in their office. He said, "I've been living in India for seven years. My teachers have told me to teach. I have started teaching in India. Would you like me to teach a course?" They said, "No, thanks."



He went on to Berkeley. As he tells the story, of course we'd known Ram Dass from India, and we're good friends. He said, he got to Berkeley and he called Ram Dass. The answering machine, which is what it was in those days, had a very forbidding message like, "Not talking to anybody. Don't leave a message."

Joseph went to telegraph avenue to continue on the pretense of accident theme. He needed to use the bathroom, so he went into some café and they said, "Only for customers." In a way, I still can't figure out. He didn't buy a bagel or something. He decided to go to another place to look for a bathroom. I think, he was on his third place when he walked in and there was Ram Dass sitting in the cafe.

Ram Dass was about to go to Boulder, to Naropa Institute, where he have a mega class of a 1,000 people. He has Joseph, if he would come lead the meditation sub-group. We say, he gave Joseph his first teaching job in the States, which is true. Joseph went to Boulder and was very, very popular teaching that. He was actually invited to stay on for the second summer session. This is still the first summer session. Some friends and I decided, "You know what? Let's go to Boulder and visit Joseph."

We went to Boulder and Joseph is living in a one-bedroom apartment, like a student apartment that had given him. At one point, nine of us moved in to this one-bedroom apartment. It was really and Jack Kornfield ws living down the hall. That's where we met. I stayed on with Joseph in the second summer session. I was his TA. Then we got invited to teach a month-long retreat, Joseph and I. So we did.

Then we got a letter from somebody saying, "I can get together some friends and a cook. Would you cook teacher retreat?" There's Jack, Joseph and I and a couple of other friends and it'll be different configurations of some of us. We had nothing. We had no home. We had nothing. I mean, they had both still living parents, but on the East Coast. We were just sleeping in people's living room couches, literally, crashing at people's homes.

One day, one of the people who I think had – hosted us the most said in some self-defense like, “I have a rental property down near Santa Cruz. Why don't you move in there?” We did. We opened it as a retreat center, where it was just a house, but you could come and do your own retreat, and we would cook for you and just have a supportive environment.

Somebody came through at one point, writing a book and wanting that atmosphere. He said, “You know, you should really start a real retreat center. You should start a center of your own, where it would become a sacred site in this country. it'll be a place where the energy that's generated when people come together, doesn't have to disperse.” He said, “I know that people are going to help you.” They're all in Massachusetts. He's right. They were the people; formed a non-profit, formed a board, were able to understand what we were looking for, found it, did the negotiation. We ended up buying this property in Barre, Massachusetts for a \$150,000, which we did not have.

This is an institutional building, or set of buildings that sleep about a 100, everything; kitchen and whatever. It was a \$150,000. It was owned by the Catholic Church, by the fathers of the Blessed Sacrament. They gave us a \$50,000 mortgage. We raised \$50,000. We couldn't get a bank to give us a mortgage for the other \$50,000. These friends went off to the bank and they personally took out loans, so that we could open the doors. That's the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts.

**[00:46:04] LW:** A couple of questions about this. When you get a room of meditators together, usually they're not very business-savvy people, especially people who spent a lot of time in India, and you're following your heart and doing all these, what people would consider airy-fairy things, especially if you're working in the banking industry. Who was the driving force? Who was the organizer? Who was the task rabbit in that circle that made sure that things – the eyes were dotted and the T's were crossed and things like that?

**[00:46:34] SS:** I mean, we were really lucky, that group of people that formed the first board, the first board of directors. They quickly saw that we were not that capable in so many realms. We had a policy for a long time, which we used to call the separation of church and state,

where the teachers would decide who else to invite to teach, and what would be taught there. The board would decide everything the board is responsible for; finances and so on.

Ultimately, they had a lot of power. Clearly, we knew nothing. We also grew up in a tradition in Asia. Grew up in that sense, where you did not really charge for the teachings. Some of the places, we paid room and boards, other places, we paid nothing, because even that was provided and voluntary donations to the teachers, [inaudible 00:47:40] or to the monastery. Suddenly, we're in the lands of, well, the staff really needs health insurance. You can't fairly have a staff here. It's like, "Huh. Do I need health insurance too? I guess, I do. It's a different world."

When we opened the doors, we charged \$6.50 a night. We had no money. Somebody's father gave them a car. That's why we had a car. It was those days. I remember very early board meeting, one of the board members said, "Well, you're not thinking about depreciation." I or somebody said, "What's depreciation?" They said, "Well, what if a roof starts leaking?" We said, "Oh, well. We'll just raise money for it," not realizing we weren't in Asia anymore. It was a real education. I think necessary, but it was all dependent on those people. We could never have done it without them.

**[00:48:50] LW:** You guys just celebrated 45 years.

**[00:48:53] SS:** We did.

**[00:48:54] LW:** What do you think is the secret to having a center like that stick around for such a long time?

**[00:49:03] SS:** Having an empowered board is part of that. We don't have the same separation of church and state anymore. I think that's very important, because it's also, in a way, it's the voice of the people. There's an exchange. We've always, as you got from that calm, somebody quoted me as saying, we didn't know what we're doing, which was true. Jack quoted me as saying, "We did it all without adult supervision," which is also true.

We always were trying to find a balance between having a sense of tradition and recognition that we didn't just make this up. At the same time, looking at where we are and what are the kinds of things people are facing. If you look at classical Buddhist teaching about livelihood, for example. Interestingly enough, he does talk about livelihood; the way we work, or the way we actually for many of us spend most of our day, most of our life, therefore, is in work, and how that can be very damaging, because we feel a tremendous moral dilemmas, or all kinds of things. Or it can be unifying and bring all of our lives together.

You look at classical teaching and it'll say, no hunting, no fishing, no killing, no dealing in the arms. Even there, the Buddhist seem to have flexibility. If a monk was going off to teach in a fishing village, she'd say, "They have to fish. That's their livelihood." Then they would talk about what to say, but what does any of that mean now? Somebody tells me as they have, "I work for this company and our policy," not my policy. The company's policy, when somebody makes a request, just immediately turn them down, because it's only the people who are loud, the squeaky wheels they get listened to. The first thing you have to do is say no.

They were weeping when they were saying that. What does that mean, in terms of the morality of our work right now in the things we face? As a community, we've always been in that tension. How to look back and honor and be aligned with what seems really good and essential, and how to adapt and be open, be flexible, and be free. From the get go, it's been like that.

**[00:51:55] LW:** You also have personally experienced a few waves of this popularization of meditation. You were there when the TM stuff started. You were one of the proponents of Buddhist insight meditation. Now we're in this other part of this, I don't know if it's a third or fourth wave of it. What can history about meditation waves teach us about where this is all going?

**[00:52:21] SS:** I think for any person, a human being like myself, it's also sensing where you fit in all of that. I have colleagues who are mainly devoted, or largely devoted, even though they're doing other things. They're devoted to helping train the next generation of teachers.

These days because of the popularization, there are many different kinds of training programs and people take them and often do incredibly wonderful things with that credential, if it's a credential. I've also heard in the effort to really make meditation available to everybody, pressure to have a training program that may not be that thorough. I was once talking to somebody, a friend. She felt she had an entree into a particular organization, or institution. They were really going to have meditation be much more widespread within their organization, but they didn't want to keep bringing in outside people to teach. They wanted their own in-house people to be trained.

She says, "Now I'm thinking that I have to help create to train the trainer's model." I said, "Well, how long is the training?" She said, "Eight hours." I said, "You cannot do that. You just cannot do that." That happens a lot too, alongside the really good training programs. IMS, the Insight Meditation Society has its own training program, which is really a little specialized, to that we are an intensive retreat center. We're not in the city. We're in the country, people when they work, come for overnight stays, or for retreats. It's a certain training. It's a four-year training.

Some people are just doing that. That's what they're devoted to. Some people really want to teach beginners. That's a whole other thing. Then you have to think about apps and technology, and maybe being in a city as we gather together again physically. Or learning how to teach online. It's a whole other thing. I think people need to find their place of what feels inspiring and right.

**[00:55:00] LW:** Do you personally do things today that you would not have even considered doing before in order to stay relevant as one of the most influential teachers in the meditation space?

**[00:55:15] SS:** Well, I'm always doing things I never considered doing, like giving talks publicly, or things like that. I don't consciously have that thought. People have told me that, like you need to –

**[00:55:29] LW:** Like, I need to get my Instagram. I need to make sure my social media, or tweet more.

**[00:55:32] SS:** I have all that. Yeah, yeah. No, I don't need to tweet more tweet and live on Twitter. Believe me, I live on Twitter. Yeah, I get all my news on Twitter. Now, I'm very Twitter-oriented.

**[00:55:44] LW:** You're also a very prolific writer. A lot of people though, write a book and writing a book can feel like an iron – like doing an IronMan competition. I feel a lot of people, they do it once, or twice and then they're done. You're what, a dozen books in at this point? Are you more of a writer now that teaches meditation? Or are you a meditation teacher that makes the time to keep organizing your thoughts in that way?

**[00:56:09] SS:** I think I'm more a writer now, in a way, because I had always wanted to be a writer and circumstances are just such. I am not traveling at all. I used to travel really a lot. I was saying to somebody the other day, it's not only the travel time, but it's all the arranging time. Who's going to pick me up at the airport? Where should I stay? What should they do? Is it that hotel? That was a lot of time. It's all recaptured now.

I am trying to teach online as much as I can in lots of different forms that I personally find it very fulfilling. I know, a lot of people feel uneasy with it. They want more direct contact. They don't want to teach online. Let's take and see everyone's face, for example, on the screen, or something like that. I feel very connected to people, anyway. Just reading those chats. If we're in Zoom. There's so many people that's just having such a hard time and exhausted. It's usually very touching. If I teach a retreat, or Joseph and I teach retreat, when it's a retreat, people are often writing in and saying, "Well, I could never come back right now to the center anyway. I'm taking care of my mother who's aged, or I'm aged. I think those days are gone for

me, or it's too hard for this I can do.” Thank you so much. People always signing in from all over the world.

It's very, very gratifying. I mean, that program we did celebrating our 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there are people from 47 countries signed into that. I really like the medium. I certainly hope to continue, but it's also freed up a lot of time, so I can write.

**[00:58:04] LW:** Your most recent book, *Real Change* is a part of – is it a trilogy? Or you've adopted this real theme –

**[00:58:12] LW:** I know.

**[00:58:13] LW:** - for your last book.

**[00:58:15] SS:** It's totally unintentional. *Real Happiness* was the first and the *Real Happiness*, *Real Happiness at Work*, *Real Love*, *Real Change*. *Real Change* was a joke title. That publisher said, “What should we call it? Real change? Ha, ha, ha, ha.” It's just banding about real change. It was a joke. Then of course, we couldn't think of another title.

**[00:58:38] LW:** You mentioned a few principles in that book. I wanted to just talk about them a bit here, because I think it's really important for people to be exposed to some of these perception shifts. You're really good with perception shifting and giving examples of that one of them – I don't think it was in *Real Change*. It was in in *Faith*. You talked about Trungpa Riponche on this whiteboard. He drew this this V-shaped figure and he asked you all, what do you see? Everybody said, “We see a bird.” What was he referring to?

**[00:59:14] SS:** He said, it's a picture of the sky with a bird flying through it.

**[00:59:21] LW:** So powerful. Just about expanding your awareness of what you see. Then you said in *Real Change*, you said, “We should look at childhood trauma as a gift.” You hear that a

lot in the spiritual community. Trauma, this is your gift, your shadow side, just embrace it as a gift. You say that we should see it as a given.

**[00:59:42] SS:** That was a quotation, actually, from my friend, Roshi Joan Halifax. I liked it so much. I actually used it in my prior book as well, *Real Love*. When I turned in *Real Love*, it was a triumph, because it was quite late turning that book. Then I didn't hear anything from my publisher. I got an away message, on vacation. I thought, great. I could have had another two weeks and we could make now. When I finally heard from him, his comment was, "I really liked the book. My favorite part of the book was when you quote Roshi Joan Halifax saying basically, don't force yourself to try to see the traumas of your past as a gift, they're givens."

I thought first, "Oh, his favorite part of my book, I didn't even write." Joan Halifax wrote it. Then I thought, I agree, actually. I think that that is very, very true, and therefore, worth repeating when I did the next book. Because so many times we try to force ourselves into a certain attitude, like an effect, say, the fact that this hurts is my fault. If I had a better attitude, have had less resistance, if I could have a different perspective, it wouldn't hurt. I don't think that's true. I think this is another part of *Real Change*. Something's just hurt and it's not our fault. What we really have both possibility and responsibility with is more what I would call the extra suffering.

Something is very painful, but we add a sense of isolation to that, like I'm the only one. Or a sense of permanence. This is the only thing I'll ever feel. Or so many things we might add on, just the conditioning, or force of habit. We can let go of those and be with what is painful in a whole new way.

**[01:01:42] LW:** Yeah. There's so many gems. There's the riddle about the son whose father died in an accident. I don't even want to give that one away. I think people should just read the book for that one.

**[01:01:51] SS:** Yeah. Thank you.



**[01:01:52] LW:** You talked about Thai sex trafficking, how that's really a result of conditions of the Thai farmers and how violence is a public health problem. What did you mean by that?

**[01:02:03] SS:** Well, there are lots of ways of looking at violence. There's a certain school of thought that says, let's look at it as a public health problem. It's like a crisis, not a sin, so to speak. There's something I also learned more about when I was writing *Real Change*, which is attribution bias, where if somebody does something wrong, say commits a violent act, and we relate to them, it's like, they look us, it's one of the same tribe, we don't have a sense of othering them in some way, then we tend to look at causes and conditions, like guns are too readily available in that area, or education is so insufficient, or there's so much trauma and kids aren't getting the counseling that they need, or whatever.

If somebody is of the other tribe, so to speak, or we consider an other, then we tend to think of that act as reflective of an inherent, innate defect. It's a bad kid, or people like that. We don't look at causes and conditions and circumstances in the environment. That perspective about violence as a public health problem is encouraging, is just the former. Let's look at causes and conditions. What is promoting this? It's not like, some kid is innately bad, or some person is not got a capacity. Maybe that capacity has never been nurtured, never been listened to, or honored. Some people would equate that with laziness, or being too lax. It doesn't have to be. It can be really rigorous, but it's also honest and it's realistic. Yeah, let's look at what's happened here.

**[01:04:10] LW:** You've also been really good about – I mean, you've been woke for a while, it sounds like, because you personally – you first-hand experienced incidents of racial discrimination against other people around you and things like that. You've been very open about including that in your talks and in your books and in your writing. I just want to acknowledge you for that. Just to wind this conversation down, I'm curious, where's the strangest place you've ever heard a Nat King Cole song?

**[01:04:39] SS:** Good Lord. I don't know. Probably an elevator.

**[01:04:43] LW:** Do you see that as your mother sending you a message whenever you hear Nat King Cole now?

**[01:04:50] SS:** I do in a way. I mean, there are a few – I don't know popular he is anymore. He should be. His voice is beautiful.

**[01:04:58] LW:** What would she think about you and everything you've been doing in your life right now?

**[01:05:04] SS:** I don't know. Sometimes something will happen, like I'm in the New York Times or something like that and people say to me, "Your mother would have been very proud of you," which is a very beautiful thing to say. Also, noting the absence of that. When I was writing *Faith*, which is really my faith story, so it's very autobiographical, there was a turning in there, which was very important for me as a human being. It just happened, because it was in the writing process, which was I was writing about her death when I was nine-years-old. There was this moment when I realized, she was a 36-year-old woman. She was so young. She was leaving me, her only child. I realized, "Oh, this is her story. It's actually not my story,"

Somehow, realizing the integrity of her being and what it must have been like for her. It was an enormous transformation and it was very important. Obviously, it was my story as well, but it is hers also.

**[01:06:13] LW:** You've said, "We don't meditate to get good at meditation. We meditate to get good at life." How does one know when they're getting good at life?

**[01:06:22] SS:** That too, can be a little confusing, because sometimes other people see it in us before we see it in ourselves. Some people told me, I was and stop meditating, because I thought nothing was happening. Then my kids came to me and said, "Please don't stop. You're much better." There are things like that. We do see it in ourselves. Listen to how you speak to yourself when you've made a mistake. Are you kinder? Can you begin again a little

more gracefully, instead of spending 18 days chastising yourself for – I mean, blown it in some way. Can you bounce back more quickly?

How are you meeting a stranger? How are you? If you're in conversation with somebody and you're not that interested and you start thinking about your email? Can you come back? Can you gather your attention? How are you in adversity? What do you add? Is this going to last forever? This is only me, or can you see that and let go of that? It's real-life stuff. It's the important stuff. It's good. That's where it counts. I just say that a lot, because I've seen so many people discouraged through the years, because they'll say, "I sit 15 minutes a day, or something like that. I still get sleepy. Or I still have thoughts." I say, "That just matter. It's really okay."

**[01:07:48] LW:** I also love that anecdote that you have on your website about U Pandita, who you were having those interviews with him and Barry. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**[01:07:57] SS:** Yeah, we brought him into Burma meditation teacher. He was a Burma meditation teacher monk. We brought in 1984 to the retreat center, where he taught a three-month retreat, which I and many of my friends sat under his guidance. He had a teaching style, where he would get into a riff and he'd say the same thing every day, again, and again and again and again, until something shifted inside of you. Then he'd go on to something else.

We were supposed to describe one sitting meditation and one walking meditation from the previous 24 hours. Well, we went in to see him, so he just had some information like, "I got really sleepy, or I was really restless, or I was filled with peace, or whatever." Most of us took notes. At the end of the sitting, we would just briefly write something down. We're walking, we'd write something down. We go in to see him the next morning with those notes and as I did.

Before I could read anything about my sitting or my walking, he'd say to me, "Tell me everything you notice when you washed your face," which was nothing. I'd leave and I'd sit and I'd walk as mindful as I could. Then when I washed my face, I'd feel my hands in the water,

and I'd feel the water on my face. I'd go in the next day. Before I could say anything, he'd say, "Tell me everything you notice when you drank a cup of tea," which was nothing. I left and I'd sit and I'd walk and I'd wash my face really mindfully, just in case he went back to that. I drank a cup of tea, I felt the warmth of the tea cup and I smell the tea and I tasted the tea. I go in the next day and he'd say, "Tell me everything you noticed when you took off your shoes," which was nothing.

I quickly saw where things were going. I thought, this is going to be horrible. It actually was wonderful, because everything became like a meditation. Everything was important and everything was a place to begin again. You finished drinking a cup of tea and got mad lost in some fantasy and I realized it, I had to start again holding the cup right there.

**[01:10:06] LW:** Final question for you, Sharon. When you think about success these days, who, or what comes to mind?

**[01:10:13] SS:** The first person that came to my mind was Ai-jen Poo, as an advocate for domestic workers, including home health care workers. I think about somebody who cares, as she does; who was trying to help a group of people that were generally, unseen, or disparaged and treated unfairly. That just watching the evolution of time, not that anyone is really treated fairly these days, but it's an actual movement. Given the pandemic, given the phrase 'essential workers,' what was known inside families, but not really understood by society. It's a growing understanding.

I've been to many memorial services for say, the parent of a friend of mine, and somebody will always say, "It was because of so-and-so, the home health care worker that my mother was able to die at home. Or so-and-so saved us as a family." If you've had the experience, you'd have individual appreciation and respect. Certainly, not as a society. I just think of somebody like her. You could say labored in relative obscurity for a long time. Now, it's much more pronounced movement.

**[01:11:51] LW:** I want to end this conversation by going back to something we talked about in the beginning, which is your love for caterpillars.

**[01:12:02] SS:** You're sending me a caterpillar?

**[01:12:04] LW:** No. What that represents for me, because a lot of times, again, that's a very common, almost cliché-ish metaphor for transformation to change. The caterpillar and the butterfly and the – We put all this emphasis on the process and the butterfly, but the caterpillar gets dismissed as this phase, this throwaway thing. You have to go through that in order to get to the big reward of being a butterfly.

The fact that you didn't really care about the butterfly part, you were really focused on the caterpillar part. For me, that represents a celebration of humanity, which is what this is, because it's the humanity that we are getting an opportunity to express ourselves through as spiritual beings. I think, when you evolve to a point in your practice, where you stop looking for Samadhi, you stop looking for bliss, you stop looking for all of that, you realize, “Hey, the gold is actually in the caterpillarness of your life. It's in everything. It's in the washing of your face. It's in the taking off of your shoes. It's in taking the line out of that emails.” Those little moments where you find that space.

I feel that's something that you uniquely contribute to this meditation space, just from your own lived experience and all of the trauma and the tragedy and the humility that you bring to the space through your various platforms and books. I just want to acknowledge you for that. Hopefully, we'll get to enjoy many more books and God knows what else, documentaries and movies and stuff based on your life. I mean, I'm sure it must be weird to see Ram Dass's documentaries and things, having been with him in the early days. Hey, I think that's going to be something that all of you guys, you and Goldstein and Kornfield. You're like the Justice League of spiritual practitioners.

**[01:13:58] SS:** That's fabulous.

**[01:14:00] LW:** For people like me, who I've only been doing this for 15, 20 years, which sounds like a long time to people who've never done anything. 50 years in the game, that's pretty significant. Anyway, I thank you and I'm standing on your shoulders and I appreciate all that you've done to bring this awareness to our society.

**[01:14:18] SS:** Well, thank you so much. It's such a delight to meet you and get to talk to you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[01:14:24] LW:** Thank you for listening to my conversation with Sharon Salzberg. You definitely want to pick up a copy of her book, *Real Change*. She's also prolific on Twitter, so you can follow her there, as well as on Instagram @SharonSalzberg. She's got classes at the Insight Meditation Society website, on the Insight Timer app, as well as in her various audio books.

Don't forget to check out the Metta Hour Podcast, which publishes a couple of new episodes each month. If you felt inspired by hearing Sharon's incredible backstory, I do have a small ask. The best way to support this podcast is by taking 10 seconds to rate it, if you haven't already done so. All you do is just look down at your screen of your phone right now, click where it says 'At The End Of The Tunnel,' which is in purple. If you're not listening to this on the Apple Podcast app, look for a button that says 'Listen on Apple Podcast.' Once you get there, you'll see the purple link. Then you scroll down past all of the previous episodes to where it says, Ratings and Reviews and just tap that star on the far right, and you left the rating. It's that easy.

I thank you in advance for taking the 10 seconds to do that. It really means a lot. More importantly, that is what will lead Apple to potentially feature this podcast on their new and noteworthy section. That's essentially how podcasts get the most traction. That's really the best way you can help me spread the word right now is just by leaving a rating. You can get the show notes and a transcript of my interview with Sharon at [lightwatkins.com/tunnel](http://lightwatkins.com/tunnel).

While you're there, don't forget to sign up for my daily dose of inspiration email, which is a short and sweet daily motivational message that I've been sending out every morning for years

now. In fact, my next book is based on my daily dose emails. It's called *Knowing Where to Look: A 108 Daily Doses of Inspiration*. It's coming out in May of 2021. Of course, you can pre order it now.

Thanks again for listening to the podcast and for sharing it with your friends and followers. I will see you back here next week, same time, same place with another amazing story from the end of the tunnel. In the meantime, keep trusting your intuition. Keep following your heart. Keep taking those leaps of faith and I will keep sending you lots of peace and love. Have a great day.

[END]