

EPISODE 171**[INTRODUCTION]**

"MN: The soul wants the heart to be alive. It doesn't care how. You can do it by stamp collecting. You can do it by gardening. So, that separates out the real work from what happens to it. Ever since still being here after my cancer journey, the real work is staying in the river with my connection to the universal stream, which produces the books, and my connection to you, which comes in the teaching circles. That, and being with loved ones and my dog, that's it. There's no five-year plan. That's it."

[0:00:46] LW: Hello, friends. And welcome back to the Light Watkins Show, where I interview ordinary folks just like you and me who've taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified with as their mission. In doing so, they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who've either heard about their story, who've witnessed them in action, or people who've directly benefited from their work.

And this week on the podcast, I'm in conversation with someone who has personally inspired me through his many writings and poems. Poet, Mark Nepo, is also a best-selling author of 25 books and over a dozen more recorded audio projects. He was part of Oprah's The Life You Want Tour back in 2014, and he's appeared on her Super Soul Sunday many times. In 2016, Mark was named as one of the 100 Most Spiritually Influential Living People. That's pretty awesome.

Needless to say, I'm honored that I get to sit down with luminaries like Mark and ask them questions about their life. And honestly, I pinch myself all the time at my good fortune. I think about all of the things that had to go my way in order for me to be able to co-create these experiences and then share it with you in hopes that some of that inspiration will rub off in your direction. I mean, who couldn't use a little more inspiration?

Anyway, Mark has a fascinating backstory. He wrote 13 books before he was discovered by somebody on Oprah's team. Get this, a yoga teacher was reading from his book in a yoga class

and one of Oprah's team members was in that class and passed the book along to Oprah who was in her final season of her famous show. Then, she invited Mark to come and be interviewed. And after that, his career and platform skyrocketed.

I love stories like that. Because, clearly, 13 books in, Mark wasn't sitting around waiting for Oprah or anyone else to discover him. He was very much in the process of serving what Steven Pressfield and Elizabeth Gilbert refer to as The Muse. And that's one of the biggest takeaways for me. We don't want to get caught up in the outcome of our work. We want to stay dedicated to the process of creation and we want to keep creating from as authentic of a place as possible and just let the outcome be whatever it is.

But, ironically, when we can let go of that outcome and stay committed to the process, that's precisely when magical things happen. You definitely want to buckle in for this one. We're going to talk about the true gifts of suffering, what lessons Mark learned from overcoming cancer, we're going to talk about understanding how everything is our teacher, how you have to lose yourself in order to find yourself, and how when you follow your heart, you will be rewarded with insight.

All right. This is a good one. So, let's get into it without further ado. We're going to dive into my conversation with the prolific poet, creator, and author of the new book *Falling Down and Getting Up*, Mr. Mark Nepo.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:04:06] LW: Mark Nepo, thank you so much for coming on to my podcast. I'm super excited to talk to you about your most recent work, *Falling Down and Getting Up*, as well as the backstory. And you've been at this for a decade. So, we've got quite a bit of a backstory there.

[0:04:21] MN: Well, thanks for having me. And I'm looking forward to being in this space together.

[0:04:26] LW: I always like to start my conversations off talking about childhood, because I do think that we are born with some sort of innate curiosity that will at some point play out later in

our lives as a purpose or a calling if we choose to accept it. And without overthinking it from my end, I'm just curious, what were some of your favorite toys or activities as a young person? Little Marky or whatever they called you in Brooklyn?

[0:04:55] MN: I like to always say that what I share are examples, not instructions. And so, to back up for a second, and then I'll be personal about it, I think everyone is born with a gift. Our first job is, if we can figure out what that gift is, to let it be our teacher. Then, I think the rest follows. And my own journey is an example of that.

But to put a context on this, there was a wonderful medieval female mystic, and I say female because so many women, especially in the Middle Ages, in the Renaissance, were not recognized. But she was Mechthild. And she was from Germany. And she had this wonderful saying. She said, "A bird doesn't fall from the sky. A fish doesn't drown in water. Each creature must find this God-given element."

I think that finding our gift, that's the first – as human beings, we have – for a dog, for a horse, it's pretty clear. A fish. A bird. But we, like a prism, a soul, and a body and time on Earth, have so many gifts and facets that our first job is to find, what's our God-given element? And then we can find our gift.

Okay. With all of that, my own example, I was born in Brooklyn. Grew up on Long Island. Didn't have a whole lot of nature around me other than urban and suburban. And even as a little boy, I didn't have the language for it, but the world spoke to me in metaphor. Even as a kid, I'd be playing, the wind would – a sudden wind would come through the trees and it stopped me. And it kind of was saying to me without words, "Pay attention. What is this like? What are we like? Come on. Come on." And it was just like my native language. And then years later I learned, "Oh, that's metaphor."

And so, what is metaphor? Well, metaphor is, simply, how do we paint images or surface images that briefly show us things that are invisible? That are essential? That are intangible? And metaphor also presumes that everything in the universe is connected, and one of the jobs of our souls is to show how.

As a poet, well, it just means I write it down. That's all. But it's an introspective process. It's a creative soul process. And in fact, my definition of poetry is not stanzas and all of that. It's the unexpected utterance of the soul. You don't even have to write it down. I just happen to.

[0:07:55] LW: Were there any breadcrumbs of your future poetic endeavors as a child that you recognize now looking back?

[0:08:03] MN: Well, I think one big creative thing in my life, not in terms of me directly, but my father. Both my parents are gone now. And my father was a master woodworker. He taught pattern-making at Brooklyn Tech High School in Brooklyn. And he also loved the sea. And he was the first one to introduce me to the sea.

And I spent a lot of – and then he built a 30-foot wooden sailboat when I was a kid. And I spent a lot of my youth on that boat. And watching him, it was very different. I would say, in the family, we had a pretty dysfunctional family. And there's a lot of stuff there. And he was very codependent. My parents were really enmeshed and he was very submissive. My mother was really very – the strong controlling one.

But when he was in his creativity, he didn't talk about it much. But when he was in his basement workshop or out in the yard building that boat, boy, something else was happening. And I was riveted. I wanted some of that. I learned that creative modeling was by demonstration. Not so much that he talked about it. Then it was kind of confusing because he'd come in the house and he just folded in the family dynamic. But when he was in that creative space, wow. It was magical.

We work in different mediums obviously. But it's interesting. Since he's gone – he's been gone about maybe eight years now. And since he's gone, it's amazing these interesting lessons I've seen how I've picked up from him. He had a workbench in the basement in our little home and he had five or six vices. And they were always filled with different projects at the same time. He'd chisel one thing and then he'd go over here and glue something else. And then he'd go over here.

He never talked about it, but all these years later, that's how I work on books. I'm always working on more than one book at the same time and they cross-pollinate until one really gets going and then I'm with it, you know? But we never talked about that. And you're, "Huh? Wow." I'm working that way that I learned from him.

[0:10:33] LW: I've heard you describe your parents having grown up in the Great Depression as literal-minded. But they would say that you, Mark, can do whatever you want to do as long as you give it your all. And then at some point, you realized that maybe they didn't believe that for themselves. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[0:10:52] MN: It's so interesting. And this is – it's archetypal that every person needs to individuate from whatever setting they grow up in. It's not about good or bad. You could be a single child and feel suffocated and you have to individuate from that even if it's loving. Or you could be one of ten and feel abandoned and you've got to liberate and individuate from that and take the best of what it is and find that God-given element. Your call. Your soul.

And for me, yeah, my parents, and I understand this more now that they're gone, they did grow up in the Great Depression where I was raised Jewish. I have a great tie to the Jewish heritage. And we'll get to my cancer journey in my 30s. But having survived cancer, I'm a student of all paths.

But anyway, to go back. They grew up as a Jewish, poor family in the depression, immigrants, we had family that died in the Holocaust. And, again, they never talked about it. But they were very bright, intelligent, and well-read. But they were very literal-minded. They were very focused on survival for my brother and I, for us coming the next generation. It was all loving.

But then the karma, they get a mystical poet for a son. Why? And I imagine that I was always, from a young age, asking a lot of questions. And I think they were like, "Why is he asking all these questions? Can he just stop?" And they did though. They did give me this belief that if you work, you give your all and you give your best, there isn't anything you can't do. And I believed it. I did believe it. That was a gift they gave to me.

And then as I was in college and started to see them and their struggles as humans, I realized, "Oh. I don't believe it. They don't believe it. They're struggling." And then it became – as I started to live that out, just giving my all to whatever was before me and would bring that home as a son, and they didn't want to hear it because they had arrived at their decisions. But in order to accept what my life was bringing to me, they would have had to revisit their decisions. And that was challenging. It was easier to push me away when I actually started living what they taught me than to welcome it. Because if they accepted it, they had to revisit the decisions that they had made.

It was always challenging. Also, one of my great classical arguments with my father, I came home from college when I realized I was a poet. I was 18, 19, and I was excited. I hadn't written anything. But I knew I was a poet. And I came home. And I was the first one in my family to go to college. They were like, "What? We didn't send you to do that."

My father whose dream for me was to be an architect. My mother's was to be a lawyer. And here I come in and I'm a poet. And my father, of course, again, out of depression, we had that classic argument. He said, "Well, how are you going to make a living?" And I don't know where it came from in me, but I said, "I'm going to live a making."

[0:14:39] LW: Of course, you said you're going to live a making.

[0:14:42] MN: But I didn't even know. And this is another important thing about self-discovery and self-knowledge, is that that came out of me in a truthful moment. I didn't know what that meant. It took me years to understand what that meant. But I knew it was true. That's one of the things that I think is so important for all of us, is that when we find what our God-given element is, that is that environment that our soul can breathe in, then we can start to understand what our gift is.

And then when our heart, which I think is our greatest muscle and Geiger counter, when our heart tells us what's true, that often for me has come before understanding. When I know what something is true, then I have to explore it to learn what it means. And that's where in the rational modern world we're taught the other way around. We're taught to know what you're going to say. Be ready to say it. Be ready to conclude.

And actually, for me, the truth of living has come the other way. By following what I know to be true, then it becomes my teacher. And this is one of the keys as to why I'm blessed to be prolific because I write about what I need to know. Not what I know. If I only wrote about what I knew, I would have written very little.

[0:16:17] LW: I want to talk about that moment a little bit more and unpack it a bit because I feel like that is a pivotal moment in a lot of people's lives when they have this urge, this thing that lights them up and they tell the people that have cared for them in their younger years about this idea. Or they come home and they're excited to share something. And that person, that older person who's had more life experience pushes back.

And you have the benefit now of life experience to know that, "Okay, you're going to be successful." But if you don't know that and you just have this feeling that this is what you're meant to be doing but it doesn't quite stack up with what the "wiser elder people are saying is a profitable path for you or a safe path for you."

And I'm thinking of Maya Angelou and her story. Maya Angelou was a stripper at some point. I can imagine her having a conversation with somebody about, "Hey, I think I'm going to go be a stripper." And that person's saying, "You don't want to do that." But we can now argue that her going through that phase led to her taking that journalism job over in Africa, which then led to her writing prolifically, which then led to her being a poet. Et cetera. Et cetera.

Is it just about getting to have agency of your own experience? How do you know, like, "I should ignore that person's well-intentioned advice for me?" Because your parents were well-intentioned for you.

[0:17:39] MN: That's a great question. Let's back into it again. Open it up. Everyone needs both the wisdom of their own soul and the wisdom of others. There's a paradox inherent in living. No one can live your life for you. No one's ever been here who's been you. And we're more together than alone, which is the title of one of my books. We're more together than – both are true. Both are true. And we often get confused because it's very natural being human that you and I are

friends. I respect you and I want your approval. I want to belong. And so, there's a relational truth there. That's wonderful. But I can't find my worth in what you think of me. That, we go back.

One of the rewards – there are two spiritual elements. We think of earth, water, air, and fire. That's the elements of the earth. Well, I would offer there are three elements at least, spiritual elements that are just as amazing and necessary, and they are presence, meaning, and relationship.

Presence is how – that's how I open up and restore and sustain my direct connection with life. If I'm called to go be a poet, or a stripper, or whatever it is in my path. Because life is an initiation. And everything we learn from – keeps shaping us toward – if we follow what's true. If we follow what is true. And so, through presence, that's how I know what's true.

But the paradox is if I'm only left to my own experience, oh, boy, I'm in trouble. Because life is so much more than just what I can experience. But if I don't live through that heartfelt presence, I can't connect with anything. Now this leads to meaning. Meaning is when you're present and I'm present, oh, man. Now we're more together than alone. Now I can hear and feel what it is to be you, which is more than my experience. And then we can share the truth of our experience. We need both. But when someone even looking out for you tries to steer you away from your own heartfelt experience, we've got to stand up and say, "Well, I know I need to do this."

Here's a great example in history. Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson was amazingly well-known. He was famous from the time he burped, okay? He was well-known everywhere and deservedly so. And he was a very generous, generous spirit. And he was writing at the time. He was about 20, 25 years older than Whitman. Whitman wasn't even known yet. And Emerson was writing around the 1830s or so. He was writing – you know what? We had the American Revolution. But in our imaginations, we're still colonial. Where's the American poet? We're still British, man. What are we doing?

And then Whitman, all by himself out there somewhere, read this and he said, "Hey, it's me." He said, "Really. Really. I'm exactly – I'm doing it, Ralph." And so, he wrote that and he sent it to Emerson. And Emerson read his poems and said, "My God. I think it is you. Come. Stay with

me. Come." So, he became his mentor. And that's how the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* was published.

But the second – this is the story. All that is to share this. When he went to publish the second edition of *Leaves of Grass*, he wanted to add his *Children of Adam* poems, which were all about Walt being gay. And he writes in his journal, which is called *Specimen Days*, that he spent an entire afternoon hours walking with Mr. Emerson in what was now Boston Commons.

Walt didn't say a word. And Emerson was trying to convince him, "Don't do it. Don't publish those poems. Trust me." And he listened. He listened respectfully. And after all that evening, afternoon, he said, "Thank you, Mr. Emerson." And then he said, "I knew more than ever that I was right." Then he went ahead and published the poems.

[0:22:49] LW: I've listened to several of your interviews. I've read your book. You love words. You love the etymology of words. And I think when you're trying to look at life through a new lens, it's really helpful to look at words that we take for granted, that we understand what they mean, and to really look at where they come from and what their true meaning or the original meaning was. And I'm just wondering, have you always been that way? Were you a lover of words before you recognized that you were a poet? Or did you become a lover of words after working with words as your tools in your toolbox?

[0:23:22] MN: Yeah. I became a lover of words after realizing that they were the only way to help make visible the truth of life. And so, there's a paradox there. Because as a poet, the only things worth writing about are the things that can't be said. And all the world's greatest literature is our failed attempts. But, wow. Look at that.

I have become interested because words I've learned, over time, they erode like stones, like mountains, like wood. And so, I found just by looking back over time that, often, if we can trace back the origin of words, they're more whole, and they're more useful and more helpful because they've fragmented over time.

I'm actually – after all this time, I have a book in manuscript now that'll be one or two books down coming out that is all about this. About the language of the soul. The power of words. And

one of the things – and I use this quote from Buddha as the doorway to this whole topic. Because it's not about the words. It's what the words point to.

Buddha, the story is that he was giving a talk, a Dharma talk after dinner one night to students and the moon was up. In a moment he felt like they were too wrapped with what he was saying. And he stopped and he said, "Look." He said, "My words are fingers pointing to the moon. Make sure you look at the moon." The value of these words is that, yeah, don't get trapped in the words. They are doorways to these amazingly divine, mystical things.

Let me use this to go to two things that we've talked about to help give an example. But one example of how words erode, there was a word before the Elizabethan age, demonian. Now, demonian, in English, it means the challenging and affirming angel. But somewhere around in Elizabethan age, we don't know who or how, that word got split into two words, demon and angel. And ever since, the challenging angel has been seen as bad. And that has stunted our growth. In the Native American tradition, that's the trickster spirit. Look what happened there.

Another great example of word, and this is through mistranslation. In the New Testament, in the stories when Jesus says, "Be thou perfect." Well, there's a guy, Neil Douglas-Klotz, who did this great book called *Prayers of the Cosmos*. He also has it on audiotape. And what he did was he took many of the sayings of Jesus and went back to the original Aramaic it's believed he spoke and translated. And he found some big mistranslations.

One was the word perfect. The word in Aramaic that was translated into English as perfect doesn't mean perfect. It means wholehearted. Oh, my God. There's a fork in the road in 2,000 years of education. Not be thou perfect. Be thou wholehearted. Whoa.

One more word, which will tie into what we were talking about, about following what's true for us. And this is the word genius. We know that the word genius in our modern parlance is someone with an exceptional gift. Mozart, Bach, Itzhak Perlman, Stephen Hawking. Even the great chess player, Bobby Fischer, had this one brilliant talent for chess. But that's not what the word originally meant. The word originally means attendant spirit. Everyone has a genius. Everyone has an attendant spirit. There are a thousand names for it. Inner voice, soul, dharma, atman, Holy Ghost, Yahweh. On and on and on and on, okay?

Now let me bring in one of Blake's proverbs, is, "Straight is the road to improvement, but crooked is the road to genius." Crooked is the road to your attendant spirit, which will be your guide, your teacher. That's why for Maya Angelo going the route of being a stripper, crooked is the road to your attendant spirit. If we follow what's true, we will find our genius.

This is why the word genie also has a kinship with genius. When you look at the famous story of Aladdin and his lamp, it's not just about rubbing the lamp and getting what you want. It's that if you embrace the light of your life, your attendant spirit will show up to guide you. If we love our children and our friends and the people that are important to us, we will not direct them where to go. We will direct them to know what they love so they can find their attendant spirit.

I'm a dedicated lifelong teacher. I love it. I love being in circles with people. But after all this time, I believe that you can't change anyone. What am I doing? Well, it's changed my understanding of what it is to be a teacher. I believe now, I've discovered after all these years that being a teacher is being like a greenhouse. It's our job to provide light and warmth and what is before us will grow as it knows how to grow, not how I want it to grow. Even being well-intentioned. It's presumptuous for me to think I know how you should grow. But I can provide light and warmth so you can grow how you need to grow.

[0:30:11] LW: I have one more question about your developmental years as you were just starting off. You mentioned that you went from being driven to being drawn. And when you were starting off in that sort of driven phase, before the cancer and all that, who was your role model as a poet? What was your idea of success like for yourself? What were you striving for?

[0:30:33] MN: I really started writing because the first woman I fell in love with dumped me and broke my heart. And I wasn't a loner in high school. But I didn't have any real – I didn't know what real friendship was yet. So I started writing just to kind of heal. I realized pretty quickly I wasn't just talking to myself. I had begun a conversation with the universe and with life. And so, I never stopped.

But my first – what I was doing before my whole cancer journey. I was hoping, "Gee," – meaning, well, if I work hard enough. Maybe. Maybe I would write one or two great poems and

add to the literature, and maybe I could get published. And maybe I could maybe get fame." All of that stuff.

And in college – and this is interesting because I had – Tu Fu is a poet from the Tang Dynasty. Chinese poet. 700s. He was one of the first people I ever read who, across time, I felt like, "Oh, man. I wish I could sit down and talk to this guy." He felt so real. I have had two or three visitations from him over time. One was about this time I was in college and I hadn't written very much and was all wrapped up in this. And he came to me in a dream. Someone told me that he was up this mountain. So I went to try to find him to ask him about greatness, and fame and all this stuff, right?

And he's coming down the mountain, and I'm coming up and I meet him. And I was kind of in awe and intimidated. And I was tongue-tied and I didn't – and he just put his hand on my shoulder in the dream. He read my mind about all these questions. And he just looked at me and said, "If you can't see what you're looking for, see what's there. It's enough." And then he ran back down the mountain to find his family. And I woke up.

Ever since then, I turned around and came down the mountain. I stopped going up the mountain. Because it's all right here between us. And this is where part of the trap of the modern world has always been, but it's more so, more acute in the modern, global world. The most menacing assumption that we suffer to me is believing that life is other than where we are. Oh, it's over there. Oh, if I get wealthy. Oh, if I get successful. Oh, if I could have that relationship. Oh, oh. It's over there.

And if there's anything I've learned over the years, it's that there is no there. There's only here. Certainly, we go travel. We do things. We go places. But wherever we land, if we're present and in relationship with our heart, we open up the same eternal moment.

[0:33:47] LW: You said that whatever is standing in our way, usually, maybe 100% of the time, is our way. And so, give us a montage of your sort of career leading up to the cancer diagnosis, and you having that discovery and how you came out of the other side of that.

[0:34:03] MN: And so, let me again share my example. But back up and say that, archetypally, everyone that lives will be given the opportunity to be dropped into the depth of life. It's often something difficult or life-threatening. But it doesn't have to be. It could be wonder, surprise, beauty, being loved unconditionally for the first time. It's not – But great love and great suffering drop us in and once we're dropped into the depth of life, that's when our real journey begins. For me, almost dying from a rare form of lymphoma in my 30s was that drop into the depth of life. I talk about that not to deify suffering. That just happens to be what it was for me.

I had my doctorate. I was teaching at the University at Albany. I was trying to get published. I was beginning a teaching career. All of a sudden, I found myself – I was in an earlier marriage, and my former wife, we both wound up having different cancers at the same time. She had cervical cancer. Neither of us had been through anything life-threatening. It was terrifying. It was upending. Everything was thrown in the air.

Of course, I was focused on her, and while I was focused on her, seeing her through her journey, I started to have this growth on my head. It didn't hurt. And it grew to the size of a grapefruit. I had friends stop me and say, "Hey, I know you're concerned with –" Ann was my former wife's name. "But you're growing a second head, buddy. You better check this out." I went, "Huh?"

I just thought I bumped my head. I didn't think anything of it. And then I fell into a whole journey of – it was a tumor growing in my skull bone, both ways, pressing out and in. I went through being thrown into a journey of discovering what it was and what to do with it. And so, I went through all kinds of very difficult tests and biopsies. I had to do it all awake because no one wanted to give me general anesthetic in case they discovered something and had to throw me into surgery right away. It turned out that that tumor vanished and that was a miracle. I was like Jonah. I was thrown out of the mouth of the whale back into life.

[0:37:12] LW: What caused that spontaneous remission that the doctors couldn't explain?

[0:37:16] MN: No one knows. And this is one of the things that led me to be a student of all paths. I had people from all traditions, formal and informal, offer me help, and blessings, and love. And so, when I was still blessed to be here, I was not. And all these years later, I'm still not

wise enough to know what worked and what didn't. And so, I believe that I was challenged to believe in everything.

And ever since then, all my work, all my books, all my teaching, I am a student of all paths. And so, that wasn't the end of that journey. That was so dramatic. I was thrown back into life, like, "Okay. Well, who am I now?" Within 10 months, that was so dramatic on my head that no one realized, including me, that there was a sister tumor on a rib in my back and now that started to grow.

And that was the real point of despair for me. The first tumor, I wasn't really afraid of dying. I was afraid of what I would have to go through. But the second time, I was like, "I don't need a wake-up call. I'm awake. Thank you." All the things that I tried to welcome the first time around weren't working. And now I was really in despair because, now, I feared I would die.

I had to have that rib and its adjacent muscles removed surgically. And I had to have very aggressive chemo after it, which almost killed me until I had to stop that. And I've been well and healing ever since. And that's been almost 35 years ago.

[0:39:06] LW: You've written 13 books prior to *The Book of Awakening*, which became –

[0:39:15] MN: Oh, no. Actually, *The Book of Awakening* was probably the third book I wrote. It came out in 2000. And it wasn't until around 2010 that Oprah wound up being moved by it. And of course, then it went everywhere instantly.

[0:39:33] LW: Well, that's what I meant. I'm sorry. You had 13 books on the market by 2010.

[0:39:38] MN: Yeah.

[0:39:39] LW: What's the backstory of how Oprah got a hold of that book? Do you know?

[0:39:45] MN: Yeah. She had several administrative assistants. And one of them, this wonderful young woman, Pier is her name. And she was taking a yoga class in Chicago. Yoga teachers have always, for some reason, loved *The Book of Awakening*. Begin sessions quoting from it.

And so, she was really into the book. And so, she gave the book to Oprah as a birthday present. And you know how that is. It could sit on a shelf. But it just happened that wherever she was at that time, the book spoke to her. And so, unbeknown to me, she's saying, "Who is this guy? I want to talk to him." The next thing I know, I'm getting one of those calls that I'm saying, "This can't be real. One of my friends has to be playing a joke on me." But it was real.

And, yeah. And I have to say, she is an amazing bridger. She is so authentic and strong of heart. She's the real deal.

[0:40:51] LW: Before you got that call, you were writing prolifically at that point. Had you resigned yourself to just kind of having modest success with these books and they will all kind of take shape and a life of their own at some point? And maybe 50 years from now, when I'm not even here anymore, somebody will discover it and blah blah blah? Or what was the story you were telling post-cancer, post-awakening, that you were telling to yourself about your own work prior to skyrocketing to the stratosphere?

[0:41:19] MN: Right. This goes back to the beginning, talking about earlier, following what is true. Because after almost dying, that rearranged – that blew up all the ways I was taught what success means and failure. I no longer thought about – again, this assumption that "Oh, success is if it reaches what? A, B, C, or D over here."

No. I had a reasonable following as a poet and as a teacher. And at that point, I did have a sense like, "Yeah, maybe when I'm gone, hopefully, my work will continue and people will continue to relate to it." But I no longer had a plan. I no longer had a dream or somebody else's dream of what success meant.

Because almost dying – man, if you reach out to me and I reach out to you, and we're real and we touch, that's all the success in the world. Where else – where are we going? There's no there. This is the atom of love that keeps the universe going. Do I – I'm human. But we hold it differently.

This gets to a deeper question that I've been exploring over the years about what it means to dream, and have goals and ambition, okay? We, in our world, our modern world, we have a dream. We have a goal. Well, it's fine to work towards things. But we deify them and then we enshrine them, and then, I'm not complete until this happens, and if I don't, then I'm a failure.

And I've come to understand that the soul wants the heart to be alive. It doesn't care how. You can do it by stamp collecting. You can do it by gardening. That separates out the real work from what happens to it. Ever since still being here after my cancer journey, the real work is staying in the river of the connection, of my connection to the universal stream, which produces the books, and my connection to you, which comes in the teaching circles. And that, and being with loved ones and my dog, that's it. There's no five-year plan. That's it. Just to be as alive as possible. As loving as possible. Holding nothing back. Giving our all. Then we light up. Then we are light and everything else is an illusion.

Of course, are we still as human beings if you don't understand what I write? Am I disappointed? Yeah. But that doesn't define who I am. And if you do get what I am, well, that makes me feel good. But that doesn't define – Buddha said, "Praise and blame are like the swish of a horse's tail." We're human. We feel them. But this is why it's important to find that element, our God-given element. To find our gift, to let it be our teacher so we can find our genius, our attendant spirit. That has to do with knowing the authority of our own being, which gets its authority from the authority of all beings.

That's this way. And then we need to belong to each other. And that's this way. And they are both twin callings.

Yeah. It's been a great gift to have my work be catapulted the way Oprah did. It's provided so many wonderful gifts for me to keep writing, and keep teaching and keep being with people in ways that I never would have imagined. But when you're – these are also two kind of archetypal positions. And it's not just about publishing. But when we're unseen, then the challenge is to retain our worth. Oh, because no one sees me. Does it matter? Why bother?

And so, that's like – if you're walking into a very strong wind. Like a real force of a wind, right? Well, you lean forward and you make good steps and keep going. Well, having been blessed to

have been seen, it's the same walk, except the winds at my back. In order to keep working, I have to lean back and still walk a step at a time and make sure I'm grounded.

[0:46:37] LW: I would also offer that the fact that you had such a long career prior to that happening, and the cancer, and everything else, it was the best position to be in to retain that humility as now a famous author whose work is recognized around the world.

[0:46:54] MN: Absolutely. I'm thankful that things have unfolded the way they have. And I think that the crucible for me was that cancer journey, of course. And there was another – I'm 72 now. I thought when I met someone my age when I was younger, they were ancient. It doesn't seem so old. But the other time that was difficult for me was when I was in my late 50s. And because of the chemo damage had done to me, I had a very difficult journey with – it had given me neuropathy.

I had stomach flu and most people get over it. But because of the neuropathy, I didn't. And that made my stomach like a backed-up sink. And when that happens, some people wind up living chronically with that for the rest of their lives. Some people, it clears up. Nobody knows how. It took about 7 months for me, and thankfully, it cleared up. I feel for people who – my God. Who have to live like that?

All this to share this other moment that was in the way. What's in the way is the way. At this time, one of the things that happens when you have that condition is you can't eat very much. I lost a lot of weight. And you can't tell if you have three bites of cottage cheese or four. The fourth bite will give you a pain in your stomach and it's unpredictable. You wind up fearing eating. I had a fear of the present at that time.

At that time, I was working. One of the few times I did a job outside of teaching. And my job, many of us were just let go. Our jobs were eliminated. That meant no health insurance. Nothing. Here I was sick and I had a fear of the future as well. Right around that time with my journey with my father, with both my parents, I had been estranged from them for many years because they were not able to be there for me during my cancer journey. And that kind of cut a cord between us.

But I was reconnecting with my father after about 15 years of no contact. And I really wanted to. I was afraid. Like, what's going to happen going back into that psychological nest? What's that going to do to me and my own sense of myself? I had a fear of the past.

All of a sudden, I ran out of tenses. Nowhere to go. And I learned, again, that I had to stand right where I was even though the only thing solid under me was a couple of inches. And then as long I stayed there, it grew to a few more inches. And then it was a foot. And it was only by standing completely where I am, accepting the truth of what's before me, that I was able to then not be rescued or reframe it. But actually, through solid being, being authentic, accept the truth of my experience and move on.

[0:50:24] LW: You talk about spiritual maturity being the process of dropping the stories that we have, that we create, and attaching them to moments and situations. How did the story in your head shift around your relationship with you and your parents and how they didn't show up for you in order to kind of restore that dynamic?

[0:50:45] MN: Well, what happened was – and I think this is very archetypal. I was about 40. In my 40s, I guess. And I was in the midst of not having any contact with them.

[0:50:59] LW: Your choice or theirs?

[0:51:01] MN: It was both. Well, what happened was – how I felt it was, was that the truth of our relation, there was no ground for us to have authentic contact. After my cancer journey, I'd reached out to them to try to establish some kind of truthful connection. Saying, "Look, if we're going to go on, we both got to own stuff." And I got a total denial from my parents, "We don't know what you're talking about." And they hadn't been there for me in, really, life and death circumstances. I didn't feel like I could pretend. Like, I couldn't send birthday cards.

And so, I just said, "Well, until there's an opening, there's nothing I can do." And there wasn't an opening. Until I had a dear friend, still a very dear friend, but he had lost his father. And the way he shared the truth of that loss brought us very, very close. And feeling his loss of his father made me realize how much I missed my father. I reached out to him after all those years, not

knowing whether he would respond or whatever. And that slowly led to us reconnecting at the end of his life, which was a great gift that we were able to do that.

But to go back at this shift of narrative. And, yes. We all – I would offer to back up again. We all go through this kind of journey, okay? Where there's a story we're born into. Can't help it. We're born into a family. And our parents are gods because we literally come from them. And then we individuate over time. Now we take some of that story but we create our own. And then as we live life, then we're asked to even drop that story and to see what part of life's story we are. How do we connect beneath all the narratives? Where do we fit in the story of life? And this is a journey we all go through.

And so, for me, I had – at this point, I was probably, like I said, in my 40s, early 40s. And I found myself, I was starting to heal from the wounds of growing up. But I was – you know, how like you pick a scab? But I was keeping those wounds alive somehow, retelling those stories. And I thought, "What am I doing? Why am I doing this?"

I realized when I was really self-honest, I was trying to keep the wounds fresh as evidence in case there was ever a trial. I was waiting for my own Law and Order episode. And of course, it never came. And I was forced in that moment to decide, "Did I choose justice or healing?"

Now, at their best, I think justice and healing are the same thing. And lots of times in life, individually and in the world, one leads to the other developmentally. But sometimes in the moment or in a phase, a developmental phase, we have to choose. I needed to let those wounds heal so I could choose healing. I needed to let go of the story and just see what I felt at being a 40-year-old person, having grown up, found my way. And, yeah, this is part of how I am and how I've come to be. It matters. And so, what?

[0:55:10] LW: We talk about things like cancer creating this sort of inner curriculum and/or being in other very dark circumstances. But then with humans, it's like we make an exception in our mind. Like, that person's treating me in some way that I don't like. They're just doing this to me because they don't like me. Or we create the story. And instead of seeing them also as the way. That's a part of my way too. And moving through that and creating some sense of forgiveness. Perhaps like Mandela being in prison for 27 years and having to get to that point where he could

forgive his captors. Maybe it took him 27 years to get to that point. And that's when he was released.

Maybe we're all experiencing our version of that with the people that we're – essentially, the way I interpret it is we're holding them to a higher standard than we hold ourselves to. We have this expectation for them in our mind, they should be showing up in this way but they're not. And so, they're doing this to me instead of doing this for me to get to that place where I can just see their humanity like I want them to see my humanity.

[0:56:12] MN: Well, yeah. I mean, for all of my journey with my parents, there's two lines that I've come up with that go like this. Having parents is being born to gods who crumble year by year into human beings.

[0:56:32] LW: I love that.

[0:56:34] MN: Yeah. Thank you. And how could they not? I mean, we literally come from them. And then, all of a sudden, we're whatever, 13, 14, 15 and we realize, "Oh, they make mistakes, and they contradict themselves, and they fall down and how could they? Zeus doesn't fall down." Yeah. Yeah, he does. He does. And then the humbling thing, of course, of, if they live long enough and we live long enough –

One of the very beautiful bittersweet moments I had toward the end of my father's life was, he had a stroke. He was 92. He's in the hospital. And I was feeding him applesauce. And the whole world was in that movement of that spoon into his mouth. And for all the years we weren't able to be together, even letting go of that. Even saying, "Well, that's fine." A lot of people have daily, regular contact with their parents and it's wonderful. That wasn't our journey. But the fact that it led to a moment like that, we lived a lifetime in that moment and I'll take it. Thank you. I'll take it.

[0:57:47] LW: That's a beautiful transition to *Falling Down and Getting Up*, which is your latest work. This is book 21 or 22?

[0:57:56] MN: This is book 25.

[0:57:59] LW: 25.

[0:57:59] MN: I know. It seems wild to even – this is more than – you were talking about dreams of success. This is more than I ever – this was not even – this was not even imaginable to me. I'm just so grateful to just be in the stream. And the truth is another aspect of being prolific is learning how to get out of the way.

[0:58:24] LW: Well, it's interesting. Because I've written four books, right? That's no 25. But I know that in order to get one of those things out into the world, you have to have an element of surrender. You also have to be driven not necessarily by success, but by deadlines. People place deadlines on you. You need your own self-imposed deadlines to meet those deadlines.

I'm wondering what your relationship is like with this concept of going with the flow, of surrendering to the muse, and meeting those deadlines. And you said you have two or three projects in the pipeline at all times. Talk about your process a little bit, because I think that's really interesting.

[0:59:04] MN: Well, my process – and I think this is – what I've always done is I do feel the work is separate from its journey in the world. And it's important to keep them separate. It doesn't mean, like I said, now it's not the case. But when I was younger, if a book is accepted, "Yay." If it's not, "Oh, God." That's all human. Again, then I step back over here and I get back in the stream because neither has anything to do with the work.

I view getting it out in the world as casting seeds in a garden. You never know which one's going to come up until it's watered, until something – you water it. You throw the seeds and then you get back to work. And it's the work that's life-giving. It's the work where I'm learning and growing.

And so, the other thing is that, as we talked about earlier, about fixating ambitions or goals. And so, of course, every book I have some kind of doorway that gives me, "Oh, this might be a book. This seems like there's a lot here." But I always – I hold it loosely. Because the truth is, 25 books, not one book has ended up being the book I started. And this is one of the hardest things to teach young writers, is that once it comes alive, it tells us where to go. It's almost as if that

essence is saying after a while, "Okay, now that I see you're serious, hang on. This is what this is about."

And of course, if we stay too stubborn, we think of that as a failure, "Oh, that's not where I was aiming." Well, where you were aiming was kindling. Now the fire is lit. Get going. And so, I always enter books I have for a couple of decades now knowing, "Okay, this is an interesting doorway. I wonder what it's going to become when it gets real." And to stay in that creative conversation.

The way that I work is I've always – I won't share a manuscript with my publisher until it's done. Because I don't want other voices interfering. This is when we were talking relationally about that authority of being and then relating. Well, no. When I'm in this authority of being, that is a solo connection with the universe and I have to do that without undue influence.

I never like, "Oh, right to the market – or this would be good. Or why don't you consider that?" No. I don't show it until it's done. Then I'm open to, "Did it make sense? Did I leave things out? Are there suggestions?" Then I'm open to other voices, but not while it's coming through my soul.

And so, at this point in my life I do have – this is wonderfully coming out now. But the next one is already set for next year. I have more books really complete in manuscript and they're kind of like – they're kind of fermenting like wine as their turn comes up.

The way that I work also – and this goes back to, again, this sense of what we look for versus what we discover. When I was young, and when I was in graduate school and as a writer, in all art forms, I was taught like everyone to look for good material.

Well, after almost dying and still being here, one of the great gifts I was given is I was scoured and given the lens of the miraculous, which means everything is good material. Everything is miraculous. I can write about a fly on a window if I open my heart and stay present enough until it becomes my teacher.

It's not about finding good material. It's about – we'll go back to that mistranslation of Jesus. It's being wholehearted. That also affects the way – in the beginning, like so many people, I would look, "Oh, this might work good in the book that working on." Well, no. I feel like I'm an inner explorer. And whether it's with myself, or on a walk, or out in the world, or in conversation with you, or what I read, I follow what comes alive. And then, in real-time, as best I can, I will write a line, a paragraph, a page, an image, a story, a question, and then I'll save it. And they're like little mosaics that then I organically look at them and say, "How does this go together?" And they will tell me how they go together.

And now, every little mosaic piece, that's all on fire because each little one was on fire. And that's how it builds out until they tell me what kind of book they want to shape. I don't have the title often or the structure until it's retrieved. And so, I like to say I retrieve the books and poems more than author them.

[1:04:41] LW: I love the way that *Falling Down and Getting Up* is structured as well. It's my favorite kind of structure, where it's all these stories. I mean, obviously, you're an amazing storyteller.

[1:04:51] MN: Thanks.

[1:04:51] LW: Stories, vignettes with some poems, and some quotes. And then there's some questions that we can walk away with. And I'm assuming it doesn't have to be read linearly. You can just kind of crack it open wherever you'd like.

[1:05:06] MN: Yeah, all my books can be read from beginning to end but you can dive in anywhere. And I also really hope and want folks to read them slowly. Read a chapter, live life. Read a chapter, live life.

[1:05:22] LW: When you say a chapter, we're talking like three or four pages per story.

[1:05:25] MN: Yeah. No. Right. Read a chapter, live life. That's how I'm writing them. Let things integrate. Let things come in and out, and weave and integrate, so you can see where these things, if anything, touches you, lives in you. And the *Falling Down and Getting Up* comes from

medieval monks. When asked how they practiced their faith, said by falling down and getting up. And I love that. I relate to that.

[1:05:50] LW: And to sequence these stories, you lay them all out in your office on the floor and you kind of let them tell you where they are supposed to live in the book and in whatever order they're going to be in, which I think is really beautiful process as well.

[1:06:01] MN: Yes. And it's fun. Because, I mean, literally, with a book like this, I'll go out the first page of each chapter and then I'll put it out. I'm in my study now. I'll put it out and I'll get some coffee and I'll just look –

[1:06:16] LW: You and Zuzu.

[1:06:18] MN: Yeah. I'll say, "Zuzu, what do you think?" She'll put her paw on a chapter.

[1:06:28] LW: You told a story. I don't know if it was Zuzu or a different dog. But you accidentally stepped on the toe and you splintered the dog's toe. And I think it's a really great – the message that you ended that story with is to remind you to walk more gently. And so, the book is about taking stories like that, stories of fear, stories of pain, stories of grief, and seeing them as teachers. Talk a little bit about walking more gently.

[1:06:53] MN: Yeah. I mean, the center part of the book, as you just said, is about the deeper teachers, fear, pain, and grief, which we all experience. Well, this was our former dog, our last dog, Mira, who died now about 10 years ago. And these dogs – we don't have children. Our dogs are like our dog child.

But I was carrying something, and she was underfoot and I fell back. My full weight went on one of her paws and it gave her a bone chip in that paw. And, literally, we wound up having surgery to get it removed because it was affecting her walking. And she later – she was fine, but she developed arthritis in that paw. And I felt terrible.

And there were times, as she got older, I would sit with her and I would feel so bad I would cry. And she would just come up and lick my face like, "What's the matter? What's the matter?" And forgiving me, you know?

But what I learned from that was what's in the way is the way, that her pain, and what happened to her and what I did to her in that mishap taught me how to walk gently. Ever since then, I am very, very careful about where I step. And think twice or make sure I am on strong footing before I take the next step. Her pain was my teacher and how to be more gentle with everything else I encounter.

[1:08:25] LW: Yeah. It reminded me of a story. I used to wait tables in New York. And one night I was carrying two mugs of hot water to a table who ordered tea. One of them spilled on the back of a patron and I just felt horrible. It's something I still remember. This was like over 20 years ago. But that moment taught me to always pay attention when I have things like that that can potentially harm someone. And so, that's why that story sort of stood out to me because it helped me also to walk more gently.

But that's a great example of the power of the stories in the book. Because all of them, they end with these little nuggets of wisdom that were sometimes or maybe all times hard-fought. And you talk about all aspects of your life, your cancer, your multiple marriages, and what you learned from those kinds of situations. But I want to just ask you in the last little time we have together about a few of the things that kind of stuck out to me that I thought are interesting, surprising truths. It's more important to be real than to be positive. What do you mean by that?

[1:09:32] MN: I think that in our age, we have all this fear of the difficult passages of life. And everyone feels them. No one – just like pain, fear and grief. "Oh, if we bring that up you're a downer." No. You're real. Everyone feels them. And if we don't give voice to them, they get worse.

And so, how we keep company on the journey is by being authentic. And if I try to be positive and force everything into this one flat – being human is a thousand moods. And being fully alive is feeling all of them as they arrive through us. And it's letting them through us that transforms us.

And so, our job, I have learned, for me, over time, I think for all of us, is to be real and not just good. If I'm real the way a flame will automatically give off heat, if I'm real, I will be good. If I'm authentic, I'm in the light, that, by its very nature, the byproduct will be positive. But if I struggle to limit what I see as negative and only see it as positive, I will preclude and hide from a lot of life. And I will actually do damage.

This is why if someone – if I'm feeling sad and you come along and say, "Come on. Cheer up." Does that ever work? No. Because all you do is make me feel more alone. Because compassion, which literally means, the term, the word being with. That's what. It means means if I am going to be compassionate, that means I agree to journey with you. That means I agree to feel your pain. I will walk with you.

Compassion isn't for sissies. Compassion takes courage and wholeheartedness. And so, yeah, that takes being real by saying – and not saying cheer up. But saying, "I see you are in pain. What is that like?" And then that leads to when we're authentic. Because I also believe that those who suffer have a wisdom the rest of us need.

And since we all suffer, we all take turns being wise. And often, even when we're helping people who are suffering, we don't stop to say, "What do you see for what you've been through?" Share the wisdom you've earned because we all need it. And all of that is opened by being real. Not insisting on being positive. Because being positive only exiles the rest of the human experience.

[1:12:27] LW: You also wrote that, in the inner world, we only grow by enhancing risk and stepping from what we know into what we don't know, which seems counterintuitive to our sort of model for success now, which is to try to be as comfortable as possible in all realms of life.

[1:12:46] MN: And this is a real challenge today in our modern world. Because when fear – this goes back to this basic choice that's been forever in every life between fear and love. It doesn't mean we don't get afraid. But when we choose love, we are choosing love even though we're afraid. When we let fear rule, then we wind up seeking only what will confirm what we already know. And that's not education.

We are asked to step into what we don't know. The way that I learned this about inner – and if we go a few minutes over, it's fine. Let me get this story. I learned this difference between enhancing risk and managing risk because years ago, I was asked to lead a workshop for executives of a bank, corporate executives. At first, I thought, "Do you have the right number? Are you sure you want me? I'm a poet. A teacher." And they said, "Yeah." So, somebody was into my work, which I was grateful for. But I also had a stereotype there.

We got in and we started working and it wasn't going well. And I just said, "Let's take a long coffee break here, okay?" We went to another room. We had coffee and donuts. And I just went around – it was about 15 executives. I went around and I sat with everybody and just said, "I really don't know what you do. Tell me what's your thing. Why are you in this and what is it that you do for people?"

In different ways, each of them said to me, "We manage risk. Whether you have a lot of money or a little money, our job is to make sure you don't lose it unnecessarily. We manage risk. Because you've worked hard for this." And then I got it. And then I called everybody back together. We went back to the other room and I said, "You know what? You've told me that you manage risk. And that's really a gift. That's important. My gift is enhancing risk." And then we were able to talk and share – you share your gift and I'll share my gift.

What I learned was – and how I framed it in some of my books is that – I'm sure it's in here somewhere in this book too. Everyone needs to both survive and thrive. To survive in the outer world, we do have to manage risk. If you and I were having this conversation while walking out on the highway and we didn't pay attention, we'd get hit by a truck. You have to manage risk in the outer world of circumstance.

It's an important skill. But in order to grow and to be fully alive in the inner world, in the relational world, you have to enhance risk. And often, we cross those. Often, because we're human, if you manage risk in the inner world, you don't grow. You get stuck. And if you enhance risk in the outer world because you have no meaning, you take needless risks. You gamble. You do dangerous things. You drive fast cars. You do all these things, all to get the hit of being alive. But all you have to do is sit down and open your heart. Enhance risk. These are twin skills that each of us needs to both survive and thrive. Because if all you do is survive, what's the point?

[1:16:38] LW: If someone is listening to this and they get inspired because they've been incubating some sort of creative idea or creative project and they say, "Okay, Mark Nepo, I love his story. He's inspired me. He's overcome all these things." What is blocking us from tapping into more of our innate creativity? Because that's seen as inherently risky in our society. Making that the focus of your work is a very risky thing to do and/or showing it to other people. Let's say you're okay with painting the picture but you don't want to show it to anybody. Because what are they going to think, right?

Because I believe we're all creative, whether we make that our occupation or not. What's blocking us? How can we – as a final sort of thought. How can we tap into that creativity?

[1:17:24] MN: Well, I think I can encourage. Only encourage. I do believe, like you, that everyone has a gift. And in order to access that gift, I just encourage everyone to hold nothing back. Follow what feels true. Keep asking and living into questions. And what's most important is being fully alive. And we are shaped by what we give our heart to.

This has changed the whole idea of what great art is to me. Great art isn't achieving something. Great art is that I have been transformed for giving myself to this thing. What we become for our effort. Not what we achieve by it. And so, the goal, if there is one, is to be who we are everywhere. And that does take risk.

In this age, there's such an epidemic of loneliness, especially among young people. And I was doing an interview last summer with a young woman who was with a journal in London. And she was saying, "My generation has an epidemic of loneliness," and did I have any advice? Well, I don't like to give advice. But I can speak to it. And what came to me was you don't interview ambulance drivers. You take the first one that comes along.

And loneliness is a real thing. And so, you take the risk and you get out of the house and you say hello. And you might be met with awkwardness or rejection. So what? We got to step. Because one of the other things that so – this was one is my oldest friend, dear friend who's also a poet. And he had this great insight about one of the side effects of the modern world and technology, is that everyone is so reactive and passive in their own bubbles. And then we look

at things and say, "Oh, well, that's not worth it. There's nothing there." But nothing comes alive until we step into it.

So, we've got to take that first step. If we stand back and watch, it's a silhouette. When we step into it, it's three-dimensional. We can't even know what's there until we step toward it. Yeah, we got to take a step.

[1:19:57] LW: Bryan Stevenson, the author of *Just Mercy*, he talks about that a lot. He was an attorney just handling cases of people who were wrongfully incarcerated. But he said, "You have to get close to it in order to really understand it and to understand what your mission is in it." He's inside of jails. He's getting strip searched and all kinds of stuff. And he's like, "That's a part of the process of getting to understand that experience." And you could argue that that's one of the reasons why, as humble as he is, he's been incredibly effective at just bringing more eyeballs to these kinds of issues.

I get that same sense about you, Mark. And I just want to acknowledge your humility. It preceded this conversation with me. That's the sense that I got from reading your work and from watching your interviews. And now, from speaking with you, you're an inspiration to me and in my work. I'm just honored that I got to have this conversation with you and all the things that led to me being in this position to be able to reach out to you and you to accept that invitation.

Thank you so, so much for doing that. Hopefully, this was just the first of many conversations that you and I will be having in this format. Yeah, I look forward to hopefully getting a chance to cross paths in person at some point.

[1:21:14] MN: Well, thank you so much.

[OUTRO]

[1:21:18] LW: Thank you for tuning in to my interview with poet and bestselling author, Mark Nepo. You can grab a copy of Mark's newest book, *Falling Down and Getting Up*, everywhere books are sold. And of course, I'll put links in the show notes which you can find at lightwatkins.com/podcast.

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Also, you can watch these interviews on my YouTube channel if you want to put a face to a story. Just search Light Watkins podcast on YouTube and you'll see the entire playlist.

If you didn't already know, I also post the raw, unedited version of each podcast in my Happiness Insiders online community. If you're the type who likes to hear all the mistakes, and the false starts, and the chitchat at the beginning and the end of the episodes, then you can listen to all of that by joining my online community at thehappinessinsiders.com.

Not only are you going to have access to the unedited versions of the podcasts, but you will also have access to my popular 108-day meditation challenge which has an 80% completion rate along with other challenges and master classes for becoming the best version of you.

All right, I look forward to hopefully seeing you back here next week with another story about someone just like me and you taking a leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. And until then, keep trusting your intuition. Keep following your heart. And keep taking those leaps of faith.

And if no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you so much. Sending you lots of love. Have a great day.

[END]