

**EPISODE 175**

**‘KC:** I think we live in a very hack-it-to-pieces, optimize yourself to death, society. For the vast majority of people, it's not attainable or desirable. When something is so out of reach, what happens is we don't even lift a finger, right? Because we don't think that we could possibly do it. And so, I try to teach a very simple, sustainable approach to filling your well. Attending your garden is just tending that inner ecosystem. The rivers and the stream and the soil and the beautiful terrain, but is there one thing that you can do each day? Or, even as beautiful that you said. My dad's oncologist would tell us, *‘Don't take it one day at a time. Take it one step at a time, because sometimes one day is too much.’*”

**[INTRODUCTION]**

**[0:01:00] LW:** Hello, friend. Welcome back to The Light Watkins Show. I am Light Watkins, and 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 as their mission in life. 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, or who witnessed them in action, or people who have directly benefited from their work.

Today, I'm in conversation with someone whose work I personally admired for a very long time. She has had a positive impact on millions of other lives through sharing her personal story of navigating cancer for over two decades. Her name is Kris Carr. Kris is a New York Times best-selling author. She's been called a “force of nature” by Oprah's magazine. She was named a new role model by the New York Times. Kris began her career as a dancer and actress in New York City in the 1990s. But in 2003, after experiencing a nagging pain in her side, a visit to her doctor confirmed that her liver looked like Swiss cheese, as it was covered in cancerous tumors.

In the beginning of her cancer journey, Kris recognized that cancer needed a makeover. As a natural storyteller, she nominated herself as the person to do just that. She began writing about and filming her journey of navigating cancer, documenting her interactions with friends and doctors and alternative quacks and blind dates and other women with cancer. She compiled a

growing list of cancer tips into a fun cancer resource book for people who want to navigate their wellness journey with humor and love.

It culminated first in a documentary called *Crazy Sexy Cancer*, which came out in 2007 at South by Southwest, and the book, *Crazy Sexy Cancer Tips*. Five more books later, Kris is a New York Times bestselling author and a thought leader in what it means to thrive with cancer. Most recently, Kris has released a new book, book number seven, which is called *I'm Not a Mourning Person*. That's mourning, spelled M-O-U-R-N-I-N-G. This book details Kris's journey while mourning the loss of her father, who also got diagnosed with cancer in 2016 and passed away a few years later. Through that experience, Kris developed a framework for helping us navigate the mourning process.

Think of it as a field guide through the rougher terrain of human emotions, filled with powerful exercises and research-driven strategies and moving stories about what to expect when you're not expecting your world to fall apart. The book has been described as a light for anyone whose world feels dark and a roadmap back toward your truest self.

Grab a cup of tea and settle in for this lighthearted and insightful conversation with my dear friend and author of *I'm Not a Mourning Person*, Miss Kris Carr.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:04:28] LW:** This is not your first rodeo. You've been around a block seven – was it seven or eight times?

**[0:04:32] KC:** This is my seventh journey around the publishing sun.

**[0:04:36] LW:** Yeah. Your book is a week old. What's your favorite part of the publishing process and what part of it are you still feeling challenged by seven books later?

**[0:04:47] KC:** I think, my favorite part is those moments when you're writing and you feel like you're in the pocket and you feel like you're really connected to yourself at a deeper level. Those are my favorite moments, where I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. It's really fun to be me right now." I'm enjoying this process. Actually, looking back, I actually also enjoy the times when I'm

struggling with my writing and because that usually means that I'm going to a deeper place in myself and a deeper healing, a deeper understanding of what it is to be a messy, marvelous human. Then, I always forget what it's like to actually market the book and the work that it takes after the book comes out in the world and you're like, "Whoa." It's like childbirth, but I've never had a child, but I can imagine it's like that where nature makes you forget, so that you'll keep procreating.

**[0:05:45] LW:** Yeah. That's the most challenging part for me is the whole marketing aspect. I was just looking through your social media and I was like, "Oh, my God." I just went through it a couple of months ago, but it's just still – having to do all the posting. It's fun having conversations, but just having to put yourself out there, I never get used to that. I never get used to it. I think people take it for granted that we're cool with all of that, but it takes a lot of effort, for me at least.

**[0:06:14] KC:** I'm with you. I think what I'm learning, I have some really wonderful friends in my life who remind me about things, like setting boundaries. Even though I teach self-care, I have wonderful friends who remind me how to practice self-care. I think that I don't know if you connect to the term introvert, or if you – me too. What I realized through this process is, is the times when I'm really out, I have to be really mindful about how I'm taking care of myself and giving myself deep rest and a time to go inward with absolutely no responsibilities. I mean, the responsibilities of everyday life, but no obligations, free time, unstructured, creative time.

You can't just keep pouring out, and this is for life, too. You can't continue to pour out without giving yourself that opportunity to fill up. I think that that's probably the thing that these campaigns teach me the most is finding the moments of filling up throughout the day, or over the weekend where you're going to really stand for that.

**[0:07:26] LW:** What does that look like on an average day? Walk me through an average, sort of morning routine, but how do you fill up? What are your practices like?

**[0:07:35] KC:** Yeah. Part of filling up today was, I wake up every day and I say a prayer of thanks and just thanking my body for another opportunity to be human.

**[0:07:44] LW:** Just in your bed while you're lying there, or do you actually get out and –

**[0:07:46] KC:** Yeah, I do. I put my hand on my heart and I say, “Thank you so much for another opportunity to do this thing called life.” I try to set an intention from that place of, what's it going to look like for you to stay connected to your heart today? For me, little moments of breaks come from – I listened to one of your podcasts. I had a meeting at 10.00. Then from 10 to 11, I had this break and I could have done so many emails, because there's so many festering in my inbox right now. But I was just like, laid on the sofa with my blanket, I listened to one of your podcasts to get ready for our energy and our time together. It was beautiful. Heart-centered and also, an opportunity for me to just take it down a notch.

Whatever. It could look like I love birds. I'm a big birder. This is not what I thought I would be when I was a teenager. I was like, “You're going to be hot and fancy.” I'm like, yeah, I actually like birds and I'm a birder. I have spent a lot of time outside feeding my birds in between podcasts. Yesterday, it was pouring rain and I had so many interviews and I just put that raincoat on and spent time cleaning my hummingbird feeders and my husband's like, “You know, you have five minutes before Good Morning Seattle.” I'm like, “Mm-hmm. I'm coming. But this is what I need.”

**[0:09:18] LW:** Mm-hmm. That sounds like a beautiful life.

**[0:09:21] KC:** When I listen to it, it is. Yeah.

**[0:09:25] LW:** Let's do this for my listeners who don't know your backstory. Let's take it back to, is it Pauling, New York? Is that where you were born, or is that where you grew up? Talk about your earlier years growing up. Your new book is like, to me, a love letter to your dad. I would love to get familiar with your relationship with him as a young person, but then he was also your adopted dad. I don't know how that all plays out, but give us some context into your developmental years. What were you thinking you would become as a young person? What were you like as a student? What ideologies did you grow up believing around success, or what it meant to be a productive citizen of the world?

**[0:10:10] KC:** Oh, you're taking us way back to the beginning, I love this. Well yes, I grew up in a very small town in upstate New York. I grew up across the street from a dairy farm. There were no kids in my neighborhood. For me, the kids were stray cats and all of my friends at the farm and nature. I was very connected, still am, to nature. It is where I felt most alive and still

do. I was a very shy child, but I was also super creative. All I wanted to do was dance and act and tell stories and write stories for my dolls and all of my cow friends.

I had a very imaginative childhood, because I grew up with my mother and my grandmother and they really let me be feral in a lot of ways. A lot of how I figured out the world was just through my creativity and having a very creative childhood. I will say that I did not know my father. Yes, you referenced, I didn't know my biological father. That was a source of great pain and confusion and suffering for me as a kid.

Then when I was nine, my mom met my stepdad, who later adopted me and he became my chosen father. A lot of the healing that came from a deep sense of abandonment and the trauma that surrounds that, I found through that relationship. When I was 31-years-old, I was diagnosed with stage four cancer, which I've been living with for 20 years now. I think that that's what, if anybody knows my story, or has read any of my books, I initially took that pain and that confusion and that reckoning, or what I call rupture and started writing about that journey, and all that I had been learning as somebody who decided to go on a pilgrimage of what true self-care looks like, at least for me. I wrote many books about that topic, about an anti-inflammatory lifestyle.

It wasn't until my dad was diagnosed in 2016 and we were – it was before the pandemic, but there was a lot of big changes that were afoot in my life. Really, it was his diagnosis that became another turning point for me. That's what I write about in this book, which is the whole process and the emotions and the experiences that come up around ruptures, or as we would say, what happens when the rug gets pulled out from under us and the opportunities that arise as a result of that.

**[0:13:00] LW:** Before we get into that, which I definitely want to get into it, but I want to fill in just a couple of more gaps from earlier life. When you reflect back now, or in these last 20 years from thriving with cancer, as you call it, and you're connecting some of those dots, you've had a couple of different career paths, you were a teacher for a long time, you were a photographer for a long time, and then you became a wellness advocate as a result of your cancer experiences. To me, what that means from reading your work is that you're still teaching, right? You're still presenting a perspective, which is what I feel like photography is, is you're capturing a perspective for people.

I'm curious. I would love to hear more about what those experiences taught you in terms of developing frameworks for understanding things, things that you're now applying to your work today. When you look back and reflect on that, can you see connections between, "Oh, wow. This thing I was experiencing while teaching, or while working with actors and models and capturing their images, I'm still doing that, but in a different way today."

The reason why I'm asking this question is because I think a lot of times, people can discount whatever they're experiencing now, not realizing, "Hey, this is going to come into play at some point in the future, and so drop into your calling." It may not seem like it's related, but just keep paying attention, stay present to it, because something good is going to come from this. What have you discovered?

**[0:14:33] KC:** I love that question. The biggest thing I can say is to continue to give ourselves permission to evolve, because I've had many careers, as you said. I started as an actor and a dancer myself. I got my first agent when I was 19-years-old. I moved to New York and I started working, but I had been a very dedicated student of the arts from the time I was a teenager, because I think for me, it gave me a sense of security, discipline, it was a structure, it was a container. Growing up in a household at times that was not stable, I craved it. If my dance teacher said, do a hundred Tendus, I did a thousand Tendus. It was like, I was just so determined. I fell in love with performing.

Here I am, many years later, and to your point, I've had a photography business, I've taught acting at NYU. I've been an actor and a performer and a director and a choreographer. But when I was diagnosed, I realized that I did not want to pursue the arts the way I had been pursuing it. It had been coming for a while. I was sick of auditioning and having somebody give me permission to do what I wanted to do. As somebody who is also very much an introvert, I'd say that every single one of those Tendus and every single class, and every time that I had to get up and put myself out there to share my creativity, or to potentially help somebody laugh, or to touch somebody's heart, every time that I did that, I was preparing for this chapter in my life.

I didn't think about that back then. If I could talk to myself back then and all of the times that I was rejected and all of the jobs that I wish I got, but somebody else got, then all of the self-doubt, I'm not good enough, I'm not this enough, I'm not that enough. Then to look at some of

the opportunities that I've had now and say, "If you didn't have that training, you'd fall flat on your face on that stage. You didn't know what kind of stage life was preparing you for."

**[0:16:46] LW:** Yeah. What's interesting is I lived in New York during those years that you were there. Well, I was there from '96 to 2002. I was in the modeling industry. I was modeling. I was just wondering, I was reflecting. I was like, "I wonder if she and I were in the same space at some point?"

**[0:17:02] KC:** We might have been.

**[0:17:02] LW:** You testing models in addition to doing portraits for actors, or mostly acting?

**[0:17:09] KC:** I wasn't, but occasionally my agents would send me on casting calls that were really for models. I would remember calling and being like, "Are you nuts? Do you know who I am?" You were probably at those. I was probably –

**[0:17:21] LW:** In commercial auditions. Yeah.

**[0:17:24] KC:** We can talk about all the different casting places that we went to and changing in cabs and all the things.

**[0:17:33] LW:** Then February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003, I just moved to Los Angeles a few months before. It was actually that. I think it was that day that I met the guy who became my meditation teacher, who inspired me to want to get into all of that. You were having a very different experience over in New York. Were you in a relationship at the time? What was your plan for Valentine's Day? Valentine's Day –

**[0:17:58] KC:** Oh, actually, no, no. I had just gone through a terrible, terrible break up. I had gone through a terrible breakup a few years before and my heart was still ripped open.

**[0:18:10] LW:** Valentine's Day was a reminder of what was happening in here.

**[0:18:14] KC:** Well, exactly. What wasn't happening in my life. Yeah, so I was diagnosed on Valentine's Day with this very rare, incurable stage 4 cancer. I was given 10 years to live. The

first doctor that I spoke to suggested a triple organ transplant. I'm coming from this very different world. I did not know anything about, first and foremost, about the body.

**[0:18:39] LW:** What was the symptom? What made you go to get checked out in the first place?

**[0:18:43] KC:** I was having a lot of pain in my side. To be honest with you, I just thought it was constipation. I was like, "I think it's constipation, but maybe I should go check it out." But I put it off –

**[0:18:55] LW:** How long had that pain been lasting? Was it a month?

**[0:18:57] KC:** I put it off for a while. Yeah, I had put it off for probably about a month, and it kept getting worse. Then I decided to go to my GP and they did ultrasound and they said that that I had lesions all over my liver, and I didn't know what lesions were. I was like, "What's a lesion? Are you sure, it's like, my liver's cut up? Like, too many martinis? What are you saying?" They're like, "No. Lesions are tumors. You need to go get a full body scan to see if there's someplace else and then a biopsy to see what the heck they are."

**[0:19:32] LW:** You went right to Whole Foods. Which Whole Foods did you go to?

**[0:19:35] KC:** Well, I went to Whole Foods after all that rigmarole. Then I got the scans. Then I had the first doctor appointment, the second one, the third opinion. Then finally, around that time, I was like, this is a thing. I got to figure out who to hire, who to fire, who to be on my team. This is a business and I'm going to have to be in charge of it. I don't know how to be a patient navigator. I don't know how to take care of myself. We have to figure out all those things, because this is an incurable ship pickle. Now, I'm the captain of it.

Around that time, I had met my doctor who is still my doctor 20 years later. He said, "Look, sometimes this can be slow growing. Sometimes it can be aggressive. Sometimes it can change out of nowhere. We're going to watch and wait and create a baseline and figure out how it's going to behave in you. While we're watching and waiting and tracking and creating that baseline, you need to live. You need to watch and live."



That moment was very profound for me, because as I said, I didn't know how to do that. I thought that people who live go to Whole Foods. They eat healthy things. They seem to radiate in ways that I don't understand. I'm going to start at that grocery store and see where it takes me.

**[0:21:07] LW:** I have a personal question. You don't have to answer it if you don't want to, but I'll ask it anyway. I find that to find those kinds of doctors, a lot of times they don't take insurance to find the best doctors. I can imagine that going through all of this and finding the best people would be very expensive. What were some of the challenges with finances at that time? Cause now, you're probably just focused all in on that. But no one really saves up for the time they get diagnosed with cancer. How was that experience?

**[0:21:39] KC:** Well, I was a member of the Screen Actors Guild at the time. I was a union member and my health insurance was through the Screen Actors Guild. I was very blessed that I had it, because to your point, that's an enormous amount of money to have to pay if it's out of pocket. I had almost let my dues lapse, which thankfully, I don't know, I think it was some guardian angel who came in and said, "Hey, open that. Be a responsible union member." A lot of what I had experimented with and tried and I had done, I've been on a very big healing journey was and continues to be something that is out of pocket. It's challenging. There's no way around that. I also have a very supportive family, and there were times where I needed help, especially in the beginning. I am first to say, I feel very lucky that I was able to.

**[0:22:39] LW:** Okay. This is all part of your story. It's all been well documented in your other books. Just give us a little montage of how you navigated that and how did the documentary come about and how did that lead to your marriage? All the things taking us up to now.

**[0:22:58] KC:** Yeah. I left the hospital. I went to Whole Foods. I put all the vegetables in my cart and didn't know what to do with them and was terrified of kale and thought that life is truly over, because I have to eat this thing. Then I bought some cookbooks and I started to learn how to cook healthy food. Then I realized, this doesn't have to be terrible. Actually, "Oh, wait. I'm starting to feel a little bit better." It's the classic journey.

What happened that summer was I actually went to New Mexico and I went to the Upaya Zen Center. I've gone to Whole Foods now, because I'm thinking, okay, I'm addressing what I'm

eating, but my mind is a mess and I've got to address what's eating me. I was there and I just so happened to see that Sharon Salzberg was teaching that night. I had heard of her, but I didn't know much about her. She gave Dharma talk and I was hooked. I was like, "I have no idea what's going to happen. I don't know how long I'm going to live, but however long it is, I want to feel as good as I'm feeling in this moment. I'm going to see if they'll let me stay here for a little bit." I stayed at Upaya for a time.

That was the beginning of this healing exploration that I decided I wanted to document. First and foremost, I was documenting it for myself, but also, because as coming from the arts, coming from a place of being a creator, that's how I get to know myself, that's how I make sense of what's happening in my world. It gave me a creative focus. It gave me something to take my mind off of cancer. I started filming my experience.

**[0:24:52] LW:** Was that just you with a camera, or do you have people?

**[0:24:54] KC:** No. It was just me. I borrowed a friend's camera and he literally – I mean, I had done a lot of still photography in my business, but I didn't know how to make a film and he would teach me little things here and there. Then, I decided I wanted to make a little trailer, because I'd been filming for probably about six to eight months. A friend of mine reminded me that I knew this guy, named Brian, who I thought was a drummer, and turns out, he was a film editor. I'm like, "You mean, the drummer guy?" He's like, "Yeah. No, he's an editor." I was like, "Oh, I need an editor. I want to cut a little trailer, because I had heard about this industry night. All I needed was a trailer for the film that I was working on."

He cut the trailer and we submitted it to the industry night and we actually got picked to be represented. Then I sold the film to the Discovery Channel. I mean, this is a four-year process and all of it was on my credit cards, so it's not totally a, "Oh, wow. That's so easy."

**[0:25:53] LW:** Did Brian agree to work for pay, or was he a part of the like, "If you join me, then we'll sell it together type of a deal?"

**[0:26:01] KC:** I think he agreed to do it because he wanted to date me, quite honest.

**[0:26:06] LW:** Of course.

**[0:26:10] KC:** Yeah, that was part of it. Yes, I had no money. It was just, well, you work on this on the side and then he did get paid and he was a big part of the process. He was co-producer of the process and we got married. The end of the film ends with us getting married, which was not how I thought the film was going to end. It's like, I think there was a part of me that wanted the film to end with this happy story of remission. To be honest with you, there's the reason why it took almost five years to make was because I was still trying to cure myself, because I thought it had to be a classic hero's journey of the moment the rupture happens, and then the hero goes out and learns a whole bunch of stuff and brings all this information back to the village, and there's some great happy ending.

It's a very distorted version of the hero's journey, but I kept pushing it off because I hadn't self-cured with all of the radical, integrative, functional, back then they called it alternative treatments that I was doing. I thought, none of this will be valuable unless it all goes away. The tagline for the film ended up being “looking for a cure and finding a life.”

**[0:27:24] LW:** Was it an easy sell when you were pitching it, or did you have to go through a lot of just rejection?

**[0:27:32] KC:** And with rejection and all of it of just, you can't –

**[0:27:36] LW:** Because you think your story is really interesting, but you're like –

**[0:27:39] KC:** I thought it was interesting.

**[0:27:40] LW:** Market is like, “Well, no, no, no, no.”

**[0:27:42] KC:** Yeah. Nobody wants to hear a story about cancer and nobody wants a story about a cancer called that. It was all this no. I just said to myself, and back to your original question, if I hadn't learned how to take rejection and keep going, I wouldn't have kept pursuing it. I had taken so much rejection in my previous career that I was like, “All I need is one person to believe in me.” You just don't see it, but I see it and I'm going to keep this faith and I'm going to keep moving ahead, because I will find one person who believes in this. That was it.

**[0:28:15] LW:** I had the same thinking. The most valuable experience from modeling was all the rejection has literally – well, I didn't realize that to be a model, you have to be discovered. That's how it's traditionally done. I discovered myself. I just woke up and decided, "I'm going to be a model today." I went to all the agencies, got rejected by everyone, and then got some more pictures, went back, got rejected by everyone again, except for the last one. That happened to me in several different markets. I just figured, "Okay. Well, this is what it is. You just get rejected until someone believes in you."

I'm so glad that you pointed that out, because I feel like, again, a lot of people listening to this are probably going through some aspect of rejection, and so easy to personalize it and think, "Oh. Well, maybe my project is not that great." The reality is you just need to find someone who aligns with your mission. Don't water down the mission. Just keep exploring tactics. What were some of the tactics that you had to explore that you didn't anticipate exploring when you first set off on this project to get your film and your book and all that stuff out into the world?

**[0:29:17] KC:** Well, first, I had to learn how to be a filmmaker. Thankfully, Brian was a filmmaker, is a filmmaker. He was like, "How about B-roll? How about I teach you a couple of other things?" I was like –

**[0:29:27] LW:** Oh, you didn't have any B-roll?

**[0:29:28] KC:** Oh, no. I was like, there's just nothing.

**[0:29:32] LW:** Just you on the camera all the time.

**[0:29:33] KC:** It was terrible. It was terrible. Meanwhile, I've been in the industry for how long? I think part of it was I was so hungry to learn and I was so excited. It was that hunger and that excitement and that connection to curiosity and joy. Even though what I was talking about was really tough stuff, it was very fueling for me. Just staying in that place was how I just kept moving forward. Also, I think when you come from a background of being an actor, or a model, or performer, you're used to playing somebody else. You're used to projecting a certain image that it's not necessarily you. The shift for me was, "This is your opportunity to be fully yourself. The more fully yourself you are, the better chance it has."

**[0:30:30] LW:** Was that intuitive, or did someone guide you in that direction?

**[0:30:34] KC:** I think it was partly intuitive, but it was also the clips that I would show that were more raw, or more vulnerable, or had my real humor were the things that the network was responding to. Anything that was too polished or performative was like, we would get an enormous amount of notes and deflated and whatnot. I was like, "Oh, so the goal is just to be yourself. I got it. Who is that? Well, guess we'll find out."

**[0:31:08] LW:** I think we're all struggling with that. I know I struggle with that all the time. Just putting stuff out on social media, you do see that the things that are most authentic are the things that just organically get that traction. Then the polished stuff that you think is going to go viral, because you spent so much time planning to be authentic, it doesn't happen.

**[0:31:29] KC:** It's true. It's true.

**[0:31:32] LW:** All right. Then you become Kris Carr. People know your name in the wellness industry. A lot of times, if people are going through that, you try to do everything yourself, right? You're like a one-person show. Then eventually, you have to let go of that control. Talk about that process for you. Again, someone's listening to this, they're going through their own thing and maybe it's starting to get a little traction, but they're feeling overwhelmed, because they're on top of the healing they're doing, they're also trying to manage all the vendors and trying to get on Oprah. Talk a little bit about how you developed your team, or whatever way it happened.

**[0:32:10] KC:** I mean, it was hair on fire. That's how I developed my team, and then having to learn how to actually lead a team. Everything I've ever learned, I've learned in the trench of doing and just going for it. I think that what I did write was to stay connected to what I was good at, which was speaking and writing and not trying to do too many of all of the things, because when you're building your business, you're building your brand, or you're building whatever it is that you want to build, it's easy to see that people are doing all of these different things and you think you have to do it all. Otherwise, you won't get any traction.

Doing it all is one of the ways you won't get that traction. Doing one or two things well and just sticking with it, for me was the lesson. Now, maybe somebody else can handle a lot more, but I couldn't. Every time, it's still happening 20 years later, I've been doing this now. Every time I start to stretch myself too thin, I don't get the results that I want. When I go back to the things that I am good at, but I also enjoy, I think that that's when the business flourishes, and so do I.

**[0:33:27] LW:** Especially if your peers are also doing a lot of things. I know you and Marie Forleo are good friends and she's had a thriving platform for a while. You may be thinking, "Well, I need to be doing more of what she's doing and this other person's doing," and it puts an added pressure on everything. You want to reinvest in the business and all the things. You ended up getting featured on Oprah. What's the backstory on that? Because none of these things happen like people think they happen. I'm just curious.

**[0:33:58] KC:** Well, I'm going to tell you that when I got the – I had that one person at the Discovery Channel, TLC, who believed in me. This one woman. Everybody wanted the show to get canceled, because for a very short period of time, they had an imprint, let's call it. I don't even remember what it would be called technically, but HBO had just come out with HBO Films, HBO Docs. TLC did TLC Life Lens. They were documentaries about real people, real stories, and it did not last for more than, I think, a year, maybe two years at the most.

At the time, there was one network exec who was the head of Life Lens, who saw the trailer and believed in us. I could feel the pressure around it. I could feel that at any moment, the film could get pulled and that it wouldn't air. I started to think about, how can I leverage opportunities? I knew that this was a very small window. I knew that there were a lot of things that I had learned that weren't in the film, and so, I decided I was going to write my first book. I had no publishers interested in me. But I went back to my old acting agency and they had just acquired a literary division. I talked about the book. I had just gotten the deal, so that was in process.

I went out to all the different publishing houses. Nobody wanted me. Everybody rejected me. There was this one last publisher. It was a small publisher in Connecticut. I lied my ass off. I was like, "I'm getting deals left and right. They're all coming in. Oh, there's Penguin. Oh, look at Random House." I'm totally hustling these people. Meanwhile, I'm sure they knew, like nobody wanted this book. They took a chance. Then I went back to the network and I was like, got the publishing deal. Literally, we started the publicity. I got booked on a bunch of different shows.

Now I'm saying on shows, "This is when the film is airing. This is when the film is airing." Well, doesn't mean that TLC was over a barrel for Kris Carr. They weren't. I think it was just that culmination of the energy that was going into both of these projects and saying, this is a special moment and I'm going to take this opportunity. That is how I got on Oprah, because both of

those things were happening at the same time. Then a lot of people started talking about it. A lot of press started to happen as a result of both of those things happening at the same time.

At first, she booked me on a different show and it got canceled. It was called Women Who Move Mountains. I was so excited. I was like, “Oh, my gosh. I mean, I’m on Women Who Moves Mountains.” Then it got canceled, I’m like, “Nope. Not moving mountains. Definitely back on the ground.” Then it ended up being a different show, and it was all about death and dying and living. It was me and Randy Pausch, who was a beautiful author who wrote the book, The Last Lecture. He got half the segment and I got half the segment. It was just the two of us. It was very exciting.

**[0:37:16] LW:** That must have been a really big highlight in your life.

**[0:37:20] KC:** It was very exciting. It was special.

**[0:37:23] LW:** What happens after you're on Oprah? What's the inbound requests like?

**[0:37:27] KC:** Well, back then, and I do feel like of elder states woman right now. Because it was so long ago and it was the actual Oprah Winfrey Show. Back then, I had a little blog. I think it was called Crazy Sexy Cancer at BlogSpot, something. I didn't even really think that blogging was a thing, or was going to be a thing. It wasn't. It was just in 2007. It was the beginning of all of that. My site crashed. My husband and I were watching the show and we were living in Brooklyn. We had our little sofa that we had found on the street and we were watching the show on our television. The little BlogSpot site crashed.

I didn't know anything about – you should build an email list. I remember when my trailer for the film was on YouTube and we had millions and millions of views and I deleted it by accident, because I didn't – there was a big learning curve, I'll just say. What happens? You go on the ride. I think that was the moment that we realized that a lot of people are looking for a better way. It wasn't just patients who were inspired by what I was sharing. It was people who didn't have illnesses, who were like, “I would like to feel better. I resonate with how you're talking about this.” We decided, okay, we have no idea how to make this into a sustainable business, where we could pay ourselves and other people. But you want to try? That's how it started.

**[0:39:10] LW:** In the background, you're still trying to heal yourself. You're still trying to get to a certain finish line, right? Then you had to come to terms with the fact that it was going to be different from what you thought it was going to be, just like the film.

**[0:39:22] KC:** Yeah, absolutely. It was at my 10-year mark, where I left the hospital and everybody was really – my family was very happy. I was doing so well. My doctor said, “You're doing great. You look great. Everything's stable. Just keep doing what you're doing.” I was devastated, because it was still there. It was one of the big turning points in my life, to tell you the honest truth, because I said to myself, “You may never be cured. You may live well into your 90s and beyond. But the entire time, you will be putting your life off, because it's not good enough, because it doesn't look a certain way, because the medical report doesn't say what you think it should say, or what you want it to say. You will have wasted your entire life. Is that what you want?” I was like, “Hell, no.”

That was the moment where I said, there's a difference between healing and curing. Curing may happen and it takes place in the body. Healing will happen, is happening, is available to each and every one of us, until the moment we leave our bodies, and beyond, right? I put down the goal of curing myself and dedicated my life to being in the spirit of healing.

**[0:40:46] LW:** Yeah. Your book, I'm Not a Mourning Person, you talk about how when you first started on that journey and you were embracing the plant-based diet, your parents would try to manage your enthusiasm around it, because you would come home for Thanksgiving and try to convert everybody, or give people lectures on why they shouldn't be eating turkey and things like that. Talk a little bit about those earlier experiences of your journey. When you've reached altitude with all of that, where you ended up, versus where you started off?

**[0:41:19] KC:** Well, yes. I was a real jerk sometimes. I came home and I write about that. I realized, I think the part of the book talks about how people aren't projects. I was so inspired by what I was learning. I was a newbie, right? So, I'm filled with all that newbie, great energy. I found the secret. I have the way. My parents were so gracious and generous to cook a macrobiotic Thanksgiving, which is not easy and not delicious. It just wasn't at the time.

I was very happy and excited, until the turkey came out. Then I decided to give a lecture about that. My dad pulled me aside and he said, “You know, I know that you're so committed and we're in. We believe in what you're talking about, but you have to meet people where they are. If



you want your message to go farther, you can't bonk people over the head with this stuff." I really heard him. It was through his diagnosis when I went with him to one of his doctor's appointments and the nutritionist walked in the room and said, "Oh, you're Kris Carr. Oh, you're fine. Just do what she tells you to do."

**[0:42:41] LW:** Which is nice. Yeah.

**[0:42:42] KC:** Which is the last thing they wanted to hear, and what he wasn't up for. I was so terrified of losing him that, of course, I did what I did for myself. I flew into action, making the game plan, networking, calling all of my colleagues that were doctors and putting together a healing protocol. He wasn't up for any of it, because he couldn't tolerate it. I realized that people aren't projects and this is not the energy that I need to be showing up with. This is not healing. We're going to go on a much deeper journey together.

**[0:43:22] LW:** You described him in the book as being pretty healthy guy, right? It was surprising. This is going to sound like a very obvious question, but can you just talk about what is cancer? When people hear that term, what does that actually mean on a biological level? Because I've heard, we all have cancer cells inside of our body all the time, but then there are other cells that keep them in check. How does the whole thing work?

**[0:43:46] KC:** Yeah. I mean, it's basically what's when a cell goes rogue, right? That happens all the time. To your point, your immune system keeps it in check. Sometimes your immune system can't tell the difference. Sometimes it can't keep it in check. Sometimes that cell, it's like a copy of a copy of – it's like a busted copy. It's going to continue to proliferate and it basically overrides the system in the most simplest terms. You have cancer cells in your body right now. Your immune system is just handling them. My immune system didn't. Maybe in some ways, my immune system is right now, because everything is in check, even though I live with stage four cancer and I have dozens of tumors in both of my lungs and my liver.

**[0:44:33] LW:** What does stage four mean? If your body's able to manage it, isn't stage four the end stage?

**[0:44:41] KC:** It is an advanced stage. Usually, the staging is about the location. If it leaves the primary organ, so the primary area. Because I have it in multiple organs, that becomes a more

advanced stage. I think it's a little different for different types of cancer, like a blood cancer, for example. For me, I have a sarcoma. It's a soft tissue cancer. My primary was my liver, and then it spread to both my lungs, which changes the staging.

**[0:45:12] LW:** Your dad was diagnosed with, was it pancreatic cancer?

**[0:45:16] KC:** Yes. Yes.

**[0:45:16] LW:** Which means what?

**[0:45:18] KC:** Pancreatic cancer is basically, cancer of your pancreas.

**[0:45:23] LW:** What are the symptoms of that?

**[0:45:26] KC:** For him, it was pain as well. He used to call it an angry stomach. It was lower back pain. He felt as though he had a hernia. He felt as though he had an ulcer. He had a really wonderful GP, thankfully, who said, everything that you're talking about means you need a CAT scan. Because he was at a business conference when he was feeling this pain. When he actually – he had gone in to get just a regular checkup thinking, again, it was an ulcer, or some other weird thing. She sent him to get a CAT scan, thankfully. He caught it relatively early, but pancreatic cancer is a very aggressive cancer. It did end up spreading.

**[0:46:16] LW:** You described that as the time your world fell apart. You said, your business was faltering. What does that look like for wellness advocates business to be faltering? Because I've been to like, with my meditation, teachers are like, there's some slow years, there's some very abundant years. When it's slow, you're like, "Oh, my God. Is this it? Is this over? Am I done?"

**[0:46:37] KC:** I hear you. Yeah. I was approaching my 20-year anniversary of living with stage for cancer. We were in the middle of a global pandemic. My dad's disease became terminal. I had made a lot of very conscious choices to slow down and to not launch as much travel as when we were in the pandemic. Before then, I got off the road. I was not writing another book. I was a little bit more on the hamster wheel of if I'm not doing, we're not earning. If there was a choice, you can keep doing, doing, doing and miss this time, or take a big hit and be here. I

chose the latter. We moved closer to my parents. I was very determined to be as big a part of their life as I could at the time.

**[0:47:38] LW:** What does someone in your estimation, if you have a parent who's been diagnosed with something, what do they need?

**[0:47:47] KC:** Oh, gosh. That's a great question. Would you want the practical?

**[0:47:51] LW:** I mean, obviously it's case-to-case. But just in general, do you think being there, being in person, because parents will say, "No, no. Don't put yourself out. Don't do this. Don't do that." Obviously, we all want to feel connection. We all want to feel like someone's there for us. Yeah, however you want to answer the question.

**[0:48:11] KC:** I think, you said it. It's connection. For me, it was about proximity and being close and being a part of the healing protocol and spending quality time. That's what my choice was. But not everybody can do that. I love the word that you used. I think, yes, there's a lot that happens and there's a lot that's needed when somebody you love is sick and there's caregiving tasks. We can't do all that by ourselves. We do need support, especially if it's a devastating illness. But nothing trumps connection. It could be that text that you're sending. It could be the regular FaceTimes. It could be the phone calls. It can be the prayers. There's so many ways that we can connect.

I think when people are going through difficult times, sometimes we don't know what to say. We don't know what to do. We don't want to get it wrong. We don't want to make things worse. Maybe we vanish, or behave in other ways that are the opposite of connection. It's good intentions, but I think it comes from that place of awkwardness and from being afraid to do it wrong, as opposed to being willing to show up even if you get it wrong.

**[0:49:37] LW:** That's what's beautiful about your situation is that you were uniquely qualified to care-give in a way that I feel like would be more compassionate than what most people who've never gone through that would probably end up doing, and making those mistakes and trying to force things on the people that they weren't really ready for and things like that. Plus, he represents the father you never really had as a younger – when you were in your earliest years.

I've read a lot about soulmate connections and that has all of the signs of someone who came into someone's life to help guide them through this experience.

Again, I'm taking a leap of assumption here, but you may even have said, in your spirit body, "Oh, I'll get it first, but it won't kill me. It'll help me be there for you in a more compassionate way," or something like that. I don't know. I don't know if any of that resonates with you. Talk a little bit about what you learned during that process of caregiving for your father.

**[0:50:41] KC:** Well, I did think that. I thought my disease was a dress rehearsal for our family. His was so much more complicated, and so much bigger, and so much more aggressive. At a certain point, it was way out of my depth, meaning my knowledge. I think that that's when the headspace fails you, the heart space calls you. That's what I learned. I'd say, I mean, it's the last five years have been my most profound spiritual time. I write a lot about that, because I call the book I'm Not a Mourning Person, because I didn't want to touch that emotion.

Even though I'm a wellness teacher and I've been doing all the things that we talked about for the last 20 years, there was a couple of places that it was like holes in my education. I think it's because I was very resistant to grief specifically, even going into the place of touching into the trauma of my diagnosis. Even though I've built a very beautiful life, it's very different from the life that I thought I was going to live. There was a mourning of my former sense of self. I never allowed myself. I called it I'm Not a Mourning Person, because I think many of us shy away from the big emotions, especially things like grief, because they're painful. I mean, there's real reasons, too.

Even from an evolutionary perspective, we want to stay safe. Everything in our body says, "Stay safe!" And big emotions don't feel safe, so you want to run away from them. In the intention to show up fully for somebody I very deeply care about, I had to get comfortable with being very uncomfortable. Not only because it was my therapist said something really great, which I talk about, which is when the grief train pulls into the station, it brings all the cars. It's fun stuff. You're like, "Wait a minute. That, too? I thought I was over that 10 years ago, and this is coming up and that's coming up. Wait, rage is coming up, and guilt is coming up." I thought, wow, all of this is up for healing, and it's up at this time because of what I'm going through. And when I'm experiencing as I'm preparing myself to lose a love that's so great to me.

We had conversations about death and dying. I didn't know how to do stuff like that, right? They were all of these firsts. The first time I allowed myself to truly grieve, the first time I allowed myself to touch trauma, the first time I allowed myself to have a conversation about death and dying with someone who was dying and not shy away from it.

**[0:53:27] LW:** He had a phrase for it. Get on the train, or something like that. Or, what was his phrase for death?

**[0:53:32] KC:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, God. It's basically, get on the bus. Yeah. It's in the introduction. Yes. Thank you.

**[0:53:39] LW:** Thanks for coming, or something like that. Yeah, I thought that was really –

**[0:53:42] KC:** Yeah. It's getting on the bus. Yeah, this whole process, I thought, wow, this is something, too, that I did not understand and I want to understand more of. It brought us closer and it allowed me to dive deeper into my own healing and to hopefully, invite other people to touch into some of these places, too.

**[0:54:04] LW:** You've said that, a lot of times in the spiritual community, when things like this happen, “Oh, it's happening for you. This is a gift. You look at the bright, the silver lining.” But you have interesting ideas about that. I want to hear more about this whole idea of something being a gift, versus something you're just, I don't know, maybe like a college course that you have to navigate, but it's not necessarily enjoyable.

**[0:54:28] KC:** Yeah. I don't think things happen for you. I don't think things happen for reasons. I think that those can be spiritual platitudes. I rail against that for my own purpose, in my own psychology. That's no judgment, if that's what anybody out there listening to believes in it. It's whatever gets you through. I think, I take it from a position of being somebody who's lived with stage four cancer for 20 years. I don't think that this happened for a reason. I don't think it happened for me to grow. I don't think that it's God's plan. I wouldn't believe in a greater power that would deal out lessons like that.

I think that all of these are constructs to explain the unexplainable, because we humans are very fearful of anything that is uncertain. I think that allowing and accepting that things are

sometimes beyond our understanding and that uncertainty is the human condition, for me, is a healthier place to be. I don't know if that answers your question.

**[0:55:35] LW:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah. As I was going through your book, I jotted down some phrases that I would love for you to elaborate on, because they're all these surprising truths. Ask what, instead of why.

**[0:55:44] KC:** Yes.

**[0:55:45] LW:** What does that mean?

**[0:55:46] KC:** Actually, let me finish my previous thought. It doesn't mean that you can't have riches from your ruptures. It doesn't mean that there aren't blessed things that happen when we open our hearts and we're willing to do the healing work. It doesn't mean any of that. I don't think that cancer is a gift, but there's been blessings that I have experienced on this journey, without question. It is not something I would ever give you. It's just a shift in how we talk about it.

**[0:56:22] LW:** I think going back to the college course example, it's like, it's something you're doing and you get out of it, what you show up for. If you're showing up, you're sitting in the front row and you're really paying attention to, "What can I learn from this experience?" You're going to get more out of it than you're sitting in the back row. I feel like, through every experience in life, we can choose. We may not be able to control what we experience. We can choose if we sit in the front row, versus the back row and how much we pay attention to it. If we don't pay attention to it, maybe we have to repeat it again and again and again and that kind of thing. It's a growth opportunity, but not necessarily a gift.

**[0:56:59] KC:** I love that.

**[0:57:00] LW:** Does that resonate?

**[0:57:02] KC:** Full alignment. Full agreement. Yes. I think that that's beautiful. Yeah. There's a saying that Carl Jung talked about, which is basically, we circle around the same themes our entire life. With each orbit, we pass a new layer of meaning, a new layer of understanding, a

new layer of growth. I think that from my perspective, it is that mechanism of orbiting that is our healing.

**[0:57:36] LW:** Love that. Yeah. I was just thinking about that the other day in regards to relationships. I'm still going to do the same shit I relationships that I'm experiencing for the last 25 years. Something with the same way. Maybe it's me. Maybe I'm the problem.

**[0:57:52] KC:** Oh, you can go to that, "Oh, here I am orbiting again. What have I learned this time?" Totally. Listen, I'm still orbiting in a lot of areas.

**[0:58:02] LW:** Well, that's the what versus why.

**[0:58:05] KC:** Yes. Thank you.

**[0:58:06] LW:** Construct, right?

**[0:58:09] KC:** Yeah. Let's talk on that. I write about this in the chapter about ruptures, and this idea that ruptures happen to each –

**[0:58:16] LW:** Which I call life landmine. I love that. I love that.

**[0:58:19] KC:** I love that. That's what they are. They happen to us and they come in all shapes and sizes and we can't avoid them. We did nothing wrong if they happen. Sometimes when we're in these places, we get really caught in why me? Why did this happen? Why now? I think that the question of why can be a very fruitful question to ask, because you may find some nugget in there if you're able to answer it. Not all questions are answerable. It's not about never asking why. It's about not getting stuck in the why. Because when you're stuck in the why, you're stuck in the unchangeable past. As opposed to saying, this is what's happening. What can I do now to support my mental health? What can I do now to support my body? What can I do now to support my spirit?

**[0:59:16] LW:** Oftentimes, the best answers are just the small steps, which I just consider to be hops. Instead of the leap of faith that I think it's romanticized in our society, like, what's a hop you can take right now? Just the next step. Just the one next step, without having to see the

whole staircase. Just the next thing that feels aligned, the next thing that resonates. I think that's where being able to tap back into our own sense of agency is really important, because as you know, when you have these kinds of diagnosis, everybody has an opinion, right? If you have a life landmine, or rupture, everyone has an opinion, everyone has a cautionary tale, everyone has advice for you.

For me, recommitting to a practice, like a meditation, or having spiritual teachers and all of that has been really helpful. What were your sources of inner wisdom that helped you tell you to tap into what you were feeling inside to stay the course of whatever you felt was aligned with your heart?

**[1:00:15] KC:** Meditation, without question. Also –

**[1:00:19] LW:** Approach the loving kindness that you learned from sharing, or what were your meditations?

**[1:00:25] KC:** I mean, I've done a lot of different practices. For me, it's just sitting in stillness. If I'm really struggling, I'll count my breath, just to have an anchor and then try to go from one to 10, but find myself at a 120 and go, "Oh, that's interesting," and start over. Usually, I try not to make a thing out of it. Just doing my best to sit in silence and sit in stillness and allow thoughts to come and go, but not even get too focused on releasing them or – I don't know if any of this makes sense. I think it will to you. For me, the commitment is just, can I show up and sit?

**[1:01:08] LW:** If an answer comes through you and or around your practice, how do you vet that answer to know that this is a legitimate next step for me, for Kris?

**[1:01:17] KC:** Well, I try to do the same thing that I do with sending emails. If you have to do a difficult email, don't sleep on it. Just drive it around. It's come up for some conversation and awareness for you to chew on. It may not be the right thing, but it's come up. Drive around a little bit. Don't act on it just yet. Sleep on it. Maybe journal about it. Then see where that thought takes you.

**[1:01:48] LW:** I like that. Yeah, I have a policy for myself, where I never – If I have to engage in a potentially confrontational exchange via email, or text message, never hit send right away.



Always stop, meditate, go to sleep, take a nap, go for a walk, do something. When you come back to it, inevitably, you will always change it. Because you think you're being compassionate, or cordial, but you see that, "Oh, I'm still very triggered."

**[1:02:15] KC:** Yes, I'm hooked.

**[1:02:18] LW:** Yeah. You also say, to allow yourself to feel your anger. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

**[1:02:24] KC:** Yeah. I think, especially in our society, when it comes to women, there are certain emotions that are more appropriate than others to share, or "to even experience." I did quote there. I don't know if you saw my air quotes. I don't think it's just for women, but I think that the point is that especially when you're dealing with the big emotions, the emotions that feel very unsettling, the emotions that feel like, if you allow yourself to feel them, you'll be overtaken and you won't be able to function properly. Those are the emotions that I think are the ones that are calling out for the deepest attention and healing.

We know that our emotions are information and our curiosity about those emotions can reveal what they're trying to teach us. For me, anger was the go-to, because it felt powerful, where grief felt very powerless. When I was sad, I could override that with anger, or frustration, or some kind of, anything but that one emotion of grief. If I allowed myself to say, "Okay, I'm not going to judge this emotion. I'm not going to berate myself, because I just got angry, because I imploded, or exploded. I am going to tend to that emotion. I'm going to get curious about it and see what it's indicating. What is it leading me towards?"

Something like anger for me is basically, your mind and your heart's way of saying, "Aw. This hurts. This is not okay. There's injustice here. This is not right." It's a way for you to defend yourself, protect yourself, protect somebody else. What's underneath it though? What are we trying to protect? What are we trying to defend? For me, what was underneath it was where I needed to put a lot of my attention, if that made sense.

**[1:04:19] LW:** Yeah. It's like a call to action. Do you have an example of how you were able to use that anger in a way that helped you to maybe help someone, or discover something about yourself, or anything like that?

**[1:04:35] KC:** Yeah. I mean, part of my success came from anger. Because if you say no, then I'm going to get pissed and I'm going to go harder. Anger actually did a lot of good things for me. When the doctor said, "You've got 10 years to live. Good luck." I was like, "You're not my doctor and I'm pissed." Here I come. I'm going to find somebody else. I'm going to knock down doors, until I find somebody who's worthy of being my doctor. Anger did a lot of really good things for me.

When out of balance, it turns inward. For me, it would turn into depression. When my life felt very out of control as my dad was dying, of course, I would have these moments of just extreme rage, because I was much more comfortable with it. I understood it more and I was familiar with it. I wasn't familiar with the softness that was underneath it and how to really care for it.

**[1:05:40] LW:** Was that depression you described, was it situational, or was it there just all the time? Even now, it's still there?

**[1:05:46] KC:** Yeah. I mean, it's something that I think I've struggled with more than I allowed myself to really realize. When I'm connected to what self-care truly needs to look like for me, giving myself that time, that space, tending to my mental and physical well-being, I do much better. When I'm out of body, like most of us, I think, we have moments. Look, as human beings, I think we wake up and we fall back to sleep. I had a wake-up call. It woke me up. It changed my life. It taught me so many beautiful things. I have gone back to sleep multiple times. All of the advice that I have shared, I have not taken myself.

You'd go back to sleep and then you wake up and then you go, "Oh, look." Instead of beating myself up, I'm going to say, "Oh, look. I'm noticing. I'm sleeping. I have awareness, which is wonderful. This means I can wake back up again, and maybe shorten the time between."

**[1:06:52] LW:** So interesting. I get headaches on occasion, these low-level migraine headaches. When I'm having a headache, I can't do anything. I just lie around and just try to sleep and drink as much water as possible and electrolytes and all the things. Then the other day, I found myself walking around and I felt great. I thought to myself, "You know what? I don't have a headache right now. This is a moment of celebration to feel this way." Yeah. That's what I was reminded of. You also mentioned the term, tending to your garden. Is that what you

mean? When you fall asleep, you have to come back and tend to your garden in order to wake back up, or how does that play into the framework?

**[1:07:28] KC:** Yeah. I write about that, because what I teach are what I call the five pillars of wellness, and about being mindful about what you're eating, what you're drinking, what you're thinking, and how you're resting and renewing. This is very basic lifestyle medicine. The key word is mindful, not perfectionistic. I think we live in a very hack it to pieces, optimize yourself to death society. For the vast majority of people, it's not attainable or desirable.

When something is so out of reach, what happens is, is we don't even lift a finger, right? Because we don't think that we could possibly do it. I try to teach a very simple, sustainable approach to filling your well. Attending your garden is just tending that inner ecosystem. The rivers and the stream and the soil and the beautiful terrain. Is there one thing that you can do each day? Or even as beautiful that you said, my dad's oncologist would tell us, "Don't take it one day at a time, take it one step at a time. Because sometimes one day is too much." For a lot of people, living in the world today, one day is too big. So, one step, especially if you're on a wellness journey, especially if you're living with some illness.

**[1:09:09] LW:** This being your seventh book, again, I've written a few books myself and I create a lot of content. I've got this person in my mind, whatever I'm thinking, "Oh, this will be a great piece of content to post. This will be really helpful in front of these, for that person." When I'm writing, I'm writing to this spiritual curiosity seeker, someone who's a lone wolf in their own community, or household. They're the only ones who really care. Because that's how I was. I have a wonderful family, great people. Everyone's really nice and caring, but I was the only one who was asking these kinds of questions about life and what's the purpose of all of this. I didn't have anybody to get good answers from down in Alabama when I was growing up. I find myself now writing to that person.

I'm curious, when you were writing this book, who's that person? Who's that avatar that you were writing to?

**[1:10:04] KC:** Well, that's a beautiful question. With my previous books, I would say that I was writing to somebody who had gone through either a big warning sign, or a big wake-up, like call me. The warning signs of like, okay, this is all piling up. I might not want to look at this, but it's

starting to trouble me. I'm going to have to look at this. It's giving me anxiety. Or, holy crap. The shizzle just hit the fan. Now what? With this book, I wrote it, honestly, I think I'm the avatar. I don't think you're supposed to be that, but I am. I was. I wrote it for the person like me who was feeling all the feels, especially the big feels are on grief and loss, and didn't know how to navigate them. Wasn't aware of the emotions and the experiences and the interconnectedness of it that I would go through, and wanted some friend to be able to talk to, or stories that made me feel that I was not crazy, or alone, or ashamed to be me, because I wasn't doing it right.

So few of us know how to do death right. You're like, what? There's no roadmap for this. We spend so much time preparing to bring a child into the world. There's a lot of parties and showers and there's a lot of baby clothes and things of the baby's need. When somebody's leaving, we are so clueless as a society. I was one of those people. I wanted to change that for myself, first and foremost, and then just take people on the journey.

**[1:11:53] LW:** It reminds me of something I heard a spiritual teacher once say – he said, “If we really knew how life worked, we would mourn when someone is born and we would celebrate when someone passes away.”

**[1:12:05] KC:** That's pretty great.

**[1:12:10] LW:** We have a funeral at the hospital when they were born.

**[1:12:15] KC:** That's pretty great.

**[1:12:17] LW:** We do a self-commission when they pass away.

**[1:12:20] KC:** That's amazing. I love that. I had a spiritual teacher, actually, who, when I was newly diagnosed, I told him and he was like, “Congratulations.” I was like, “What?” I was so clueless at the time, but I could see that the why he congratulated me now. Yeah, I talk about this in the book. There's a chapter and there's a whole section about having the conversation with your loved one, if somebody is nearing that stage of life, where they're transitioning and they want to talk about it. Then how to approach that. Because for me, I was afraid to get it wrong. I was afraid I'd create hurt. I was afraid I would create drama. I was afraid that my tears would create more suffering for my dad. I talked about it with my therapist and she gave such

great wisdom, which she said, why don't you start by talking about, talking about it? Have a little dress rehearsal.

That's what I did. I said, "If you want to have this conversation, I'm open and I'm available. I might not know what to say. I will probably cry, but I'm ready to show up." He said, "I would love to have that conversation. It's so lonely, because the world is moving on." People are talking about their futures and people are talking really quickly, sometimes talking over him, because he wasn't keeping up with the pace that all of us travel. To be able to just slow it down and say, this is the truth of what's happening and this is what I'm feeling. These are the things I'm sad about him, was such a gift to be able to have that conversation with him. Then also, to be able to show up for him.

Our people tell us what they need. Sometimes we're just afraid like, "Oh, let's change the subject. Let's talk about something more happy. Oh, you're going to be just fine. Buck up. You're going to get through this." That is doing somebody a disservice, because what they're trying to do in that moment is connect. What we're doing when we change the subject, or say no in whatever way is block the connection.

**[1:14:28] LW:** Also, they put pressure on them to feel better every day, because the first person coming over saying, "Don't you feel better today? I gave you the soup yesterday." It's not always how it is. Okay, a couple of final questions. I wanted to go at process, because I'm always thinking about the listener and someone's listening to this, they're going through their experience, whatever that experience is. Like you, they may want to share it with other people. When I was reading your book, I'm always amazed when I read memoirs, when people recount things that happened years and years ago. I can't remember what happened last week, right? If sat down and try to remember all the – how the conversation went, the details, I can't remember any of it. I'm always impressed when people are able to get into those details.

Was that from a journal that you journal about these things? Do you look at photos? How do you remember things that happened in such great detail? Do you recommend for other people who may want to share their experience to help people, should they start vlogging? Should they start blogging? Should they start journaling? What are your recommendations in that regard?

**[1:15:32] KC:** I love this question. This is so fun. Okay, I'm going to tell you how I do it. Ready? I don't remember anything either.

**[1:15:44] LW:** I'm like, "Am I the only writer who can't remember anything?" Everyone else seems to have this great memory.

**[1:15:49] KC:** No, no, no. I don't have a good memory at all. Then trauma comes along and you dissociate, you know what I mean? You're just like, "I don't know. Was it, did I have a childhood? Who knows?" The thing that I do is I have a story bank. I recommend everybody, every writer, and anybody who's interested in healing, too, because you don't have to be – writing is not just, I want to be a published writer. I think that writing is some of the greatest, most available to all of us, ways, tools for getting to know yourself more, and for processing, as you know.

When something's going on that's interesting to me, I write the story down. I keep an ongoing story bank, because I know that I'm going to write many books. Those moments are going to pass. What's also going to pass is the visceralness of the moment, what I was feeling, what the air was like, what it felt like to be in that moment. What I was hearing around me, what it tasted like, right? All of the elements, the senses, I'm not going to remember that. I've kept so many journals. I have like a, when I die, all of those are going with me. Put me on a pile, but light the fire, me and the journals, just burn it up. But there's a lot of them, so that's a thing. It's going to be like, burning man, right? Keep track of those stories.

**[1:17:13] LW:** You journal every day. When I journaled before, and I don't journal often, because I had a very cumbersome, because I can't help but write all the details, as if someone from the future is going to be reading this, they need to know all the context. I was like, "This is too much. I can't do this anymore." What kind of journaling do you do and how often do you do it?

**[1:17:33] KC:** It used to be every day. Now, it's definitely a couple times a week, because I just finished the book, so I'm a little bit like, I don't want to write right now. I'm just recovering. If there's a big moment that happens, it's probably not more than a page, or two. Unless, if I'm inspired. But I try to get the who, what, when, where, and some of the emotion and some of the humor, or some of the inner monologue, what I was thinking.

In my story bank, it's often shorthand, too. If I opened my story bank right now, there's one I know, that's Father Francis and the poodle. I know exactly what that story means. As I'm starting to outline a new book, what I will do is look at all the stories, see where I am right now. Where are some of the themes? How does the chest you connect? Then I could start to lay out chapters. I to say, I love 10 chapters, 12 chapters. Okay, this is my palette. This is my canvas. There's going to be X number of chapters. I start to lay out stories and themes.

The book comes to me, right? It's, "Oh, this is a book about confidence. This is a book about grief. This is a book about whatever it is." I'll start to write my stories. Then the teachings will come. Then the research and the support will – I will build around it. That's my method. There's a million ways to do this, but I like to start with my life.

**[1:19:00] LW:** Yeah, all of my books have come to me. You mentioned that the title, I'm Not a Mourning Person, which is genius. It came to you in a flash. Did the idea of the book come to you first? Or did the title come to you? You thought, "Oh, I need to do a book about this experience, because this is the perfect title." Where were you when that title came to you? Were you doing dishes? Were you in the bathroom taking a shower? What was going on?

**[1:19:26] KC:** Yeah. No, I did not actually want to write this book at first. I'm not saying that for clever marketing. It has been seven years. I was on a dry spell. My publishers were like, "Yo, has been. It's time for you to write another book." I thought, I have to write one of those catchy mass marketable manifesting, or you go girl, just empowerment books, where you're just like, "I can't put it down. Yum, yum, yum."

Every part of my body was like, "This is exhausting. I just want to sleep. I can't write that book. Here's what I'm dealing with right now. By the way, we're in a global pandemic. I'm not the only person losing people, or losing my job, or losing my former sense of self, or navigating a world that's so different from anything I know. I'm traumatized by it." I was like, "All right. Well, I guess, here we go. We're going to write a book about grief." They were like, "Grief. Really? Grief does not sell." Even when people know they should read a grief book, they're like, "Hell, no. Get that book away from me." I was like, "No, no, no. This is the book."

God bless. They were like, “Let's do it.” I did not have a title. In my contract, it's called The Unicorn Project. Thankfully, they took the chance. I was like, I have no idea what it's going to be called, but we're going to go into these messy places together. I'll bring the flashlight. You bring the sensible shoes. Then it wasn't until the very end when they're like, “Look, we need something for the catalog.” I had a doc, a Google Doc with over a hundred titles, each one more schmaltzy than last. I mean, they were just terrible. Some of them were just so on the nose. It was just boring. I just couldn't get it.

Then I remember one day, I was feeling really bad about this title. Whenever I feel bad, I watch stand up. I was getting better when I watch Stand Up. My husband will go by and be like, “Oh, she's not doing well.” I was drawn, stand up. It came. It came from that place of allowing myself to laugh, quite honestly.

**[1:21:45] LW:** Was it something this comedian said that triggered it, or just literally out of left field just came as you were doing this other thing?

**[1:21:52] KC:** It came as I was doing this other thing. I think the comedian was talking about either grief, or it's really heartfelt, but really funny. I wish I could tell you who it was. I don't remember who it was, but it was just that moment of levity. I thought, there's something to this title that has to have that levity, because I do weave in humor throughout the book. I wanted somebody to say, “Oh, if I'm willing to touch a grief book, as if you're touching kryptonite,” you know what I mean? The cover has to have something in it that makes it maybe a little bit more inviting. I was like, I'm Not a Mourning Person. I mean, at least somebody's going to laugh if they walk by that book, even if they don't buy it, they had a moment of laughter, which is really healthy. So great.

**[1:22:43] LW:** That's awesome.

**[1:22:44] KC:** I'll tell you, my editor said, this is either – this is true. She said, “This is either the stupidest title I've ever heard, or it's brilliant.” I was like, “Let's go with brilliant.” She's like, “I don't know how I feel about this.” I'm like, “The fact that you had either both of those responses.” I was like, “I think I'm on to something.”



**[1:23:08] LW:** She brought it up. Who are some of your favorite comedians? I'm a big stand-up comedy fan.

**[1:23:13] KC:** Oh. Well, all the classics Chappelle. Carlin. I love Chelsea Handler. There's this woman that I really, really love right now. Her name is Rosebud Baker. Have you ever –

**[1:23:22] LW:** No, but I'm writing it down. I'm going to check it out. Rosebud.

**[1:23:25] KC:** Fantastic. Baker.

**[1:23:27] LW:** Awesome. Well, Kris, that was fun. Thank you so much for carving out time during this busy and still pretty busy, I'm sure, being a week out from the book launch and coming on to my little podcast and sharing the back story and answering all my very personal questions about your process.

**[1:23:51] KC:** It's a delight. Thank you so much for having me. This is really a highlight. I was so thrilled when you wanted me to come on your show.

**[1:23:59] LW:** Oh, thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. I just want to acknowledge you for showing up. I think life gets really interesting when you have had so many experiences that you learned, "Oh, I don't need to take these seriously anymore. I can just take it all as it comes," and you're starting to see connections more than you've ever before. Yeah, it just allows you to be a lot more relaxed with things. That definitely came through in your writing. I have a lot more to go. You've got these other six books which I have not consumed yet. I need to go back and get more. I want more. I want more Kris Carr. Anyway, I look forward to connecting in person at some point soon, which I'm sure will happen. Maybe at some wellness conference, or somewhere.

**[1:24:47] KC:** I know. That will be wonderful.

**[1:24:50] LW:** Yeah. Yeah. In the meantime, I want everybody to get a copy of this book. I'm Not a Mourning Person. It's sold everywhere books are available, and I'll put everything in the show notes. Yeah, and make sure you follow Kris on the socials. She's amazing.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[1:25:06] LW:** Thank you for tuning into my interview with author, Kris Carr. You can grab a copy of I'm Not a Mourning Person everywhere books are sold. I highly recommend following Kris on the socials @CrazySexyKris. That's Kris spelled K-R-I-S. Of course, I'll put links to everything that Kris and I talked about in the show notes, which you can find at [lightwatkins.com/podcast](http://lightwatkins.com/podcast). If you enjoyed our conversation and you found it inspiring and you're now thinking to yourself, "Wow, I'd love to hear Light interview someone like ...," here's how you can help me make that interview happen. You see, I reach out to my dream list of guests all the time and some of them accept and many more don't accept. That's because my podcast, while impactful and inspiring is still in its building phase.

With potential guests, or their gatekeepers, what they do when they come across an invitation like mine to come onto my show is they look at how many ratings a podcast has. That's how they vet, whether a podcast has enough engagement for them to accept the invitation. That's why you always hear podcast hosts like me say, rate the podcast, review the podcast. Because it's that one little tiny thing can make such a significant difference in the chances of someone coming onto the show, versus not coming onto the show. It only takes 10 seconds.

Here's what you have to do. Just look at your screen and click on the name of the show. That's two seconds. Now scroll down past those first five episodes. That's five seconds. You'll see a space with five blank stars. All you do is click the star on the right and you've left a five-star rating. Boom, 10 seconds flat. If you feel inspired to go the extra mile while you're there, write a one-line review of what you like about the podcast.

Also, don't forget, you can watch these interviews on YouTube. If you ever want to put a face to a story, just go to YouTube, search Light Watkins Podcast and you'll see the entire playlist and make sure to subscribe there as well, because YouTube subscriptions also count. If you're the type who likes to hear all the mistakes and the false starts and the chit chat in the beginning of the episode, then you can listen to all of that by joining my online community at [thehappinessinsiders.com](http://thehappinessinsiders.com). Not only are you going to have access to the unedited version of the podcast, but you'll also have access to my 108-day meditation challenge, 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, just like you, taking that leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. Until then, keep trusting your intuition, keep following your heart, and by all means, keep taking those leaps of faith. If no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you and have a great day.

[END]