



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 070.5 – Remembrance
September 11, 2021

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Welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

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Hello and welcome to Episode 70 and a half. Thanks so much for joining me for the shortened impromptu episode.

As you know by now, I take a mind body spirit approach to well-being, one that doesn't ignore or minimize difficult emotions, but instead recognizes and works through them with wellness practices. And this week, I sure got to practice what I preach.

Today is September 11th 2021. And I'm sitting here in New Jersey holding my Morgan Stanley Dean Witter World Trade Center ID card that's starting to fade with age, and a brass key for the ladies room on the 56th floor of Tower Two. These are items that no longer have the ability to unlock turnstiles or doors.

Somewhere in my paper archive is a printed email from a former colleague changing a meeting I was to attend there from Tuesday the 11th to Thursday the 13th. And because of that schedule change, I commuted to the midtown office that day in 2001.

For two decades now, on each anniversary, I've privately honored the memory of those lost, of the countless people who served in the aftermath, and all those who grieved and still grieve. I kept the news turned off each year during that week and focused on quiet reflection, usually in nature and with pen in hand.



But this year I felt called to watch a documentary entitled *Memory Box: Echoes of 9/11*. And if you feel called to watch it, I'll put a link to the trailer in the show notes. Here's the premise...

In the months following the attacks, artist Ruth Sergel set up a plywood booth in New York, Washington, DC and Pennsylvania. She invited those passing by to sit in the private space and recount their story using a self-operated video camera. More than 500 people recorded 150 hours of film. In 2020, a documentary film team invited a number of them to re-enter the plywood box and reflect on the last two decades.

These self-recorded accounts are raw and intimate and interspersed with archived footage of the day that I had not seen in 20 years. And I have to admit that within seconds of seeing that first person recount their story, so began 90 minutes of catharsis.

These are real people sharing real experiences: shock, trauma, heartbreak, grief, and survival. The plywood booth turned confessional served as a safe space to explore their tender emotional landscape, and in some cases, helped process grief for the first time. And remarkably, they also recalled the bravery and the kindness of others they witnessed under such horrific circumstances.

Toward the end of the film, we see the present day video portraits powerfully juxtaposed to the earlier footage. Many spoke of the importance of expressing their experience in some way, as well as the responsibility they felt to continue on - for the ones they lost, for their kids, and for their community - and to try to live as joyously as they could.

As powerful as these individual stories are, they're part of a collective web of who we are as a society and how we come together to process such epic levels of trauma and grief.

As I watched and remembered how we all came together back then, I wondered if we would gather in the same way today. And even more chilling, will we have the opportunity to find out.

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I also wondered what pulled people into that booth and how they were able to try to articulate their loss and guilt and sadness. In their bewilderment, we recognize ourselves. And in their healing, we see our collective resilience and what it means to be human living in these times.

Such is the power of witnessing, of telling our story. Even if we document it for ourselves - our notebook or a phone camera becoming our personal plywood booth of safety.