



The Athena Wellness Podcast  
Episode 081 – Embracing Your Full Power with Rachel S. Heslin  
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00:05

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.

00:30

Hello and welcome to Episode 81. Thanks so much for joining me.

I'm joined today by author Rachel S. Heslin, who is the founder of The Fullness of Your Power, a company that helps people embrace all parts of their true selves so they can live deep, fulfilling lives.

Rachel has been immersed in the study of psychology for over 40 years, learning the concepts of neuro linguistic programming, or NLP, from her clinical psychologist father at an early age.

We had quite a far reaching conversation. And here's a few of the topics we cover:

- Strategies for navigating our lives;
- Ways to release what no longer serves us;
- Why grief is an ally; and
- How to stay well and handle uncertainty.

We end this episode with our Dose of Inspiration segment where Rachel shares some of the things that are lighting her up these days. And as always, I'll put links to those items and Rachel's contact information in the show notes.

And now on to the show. I hope you enjoy the conversation.



01:41 Kathy

So Rachel, welcome to The Athena Wellness Podcast. Thanks so much for being here today.

01:48 Rachel

Thank you so much for inviting me.

01:51 Kathy

So please share a bit about who you are and what you do.

01:54 Rachel

Yeah, I had an interesting childhood in that my father was a clinical psychologist. And they always talk about how psychologists practice on their kids. Mine went one step further and actually taught me what it was he was learning. So I was introduced to NLP when I was like nine. I was this little kid talking about “should” and “requisite variety” and all these things.

And it really did shift how I look at the world. And I am fascinated by how the stories we tell ourselves impact, not just our experience, but our opportunities. And over the years, I’ve discovered most people don’t start out looking at the world this way.

02:50 Kathy

(laughs) I can confirm that’s true!

02:52 Rachel

Yeah. So what I love doing is working with people who feel like they’re their own worst enemies. They get caught up in people pleasing and self sabotage, and imposter syndrome and all these things that they don’t recognize as being their internal stories.

And what I do is I help them learn how to embrace all parts of themselves, so that they can live happier, more successful, deeply fulfilling lives, and essentially take control of their experience. And once they realized that everything they wanted to be actually is already inside of them, they become deeply empowered and create these lives that they actually enjoy living.



03:46 Kathy

Mmmhmm, wow, that was quite an introduction. And just to follow up on that - you've written a book called *Navigating Life, Eight Strategies to Guide Your Way*. And you suggest that the way to the life that you want to live is by constructing a comprehensive system. Can you talk a little bit about what that means and why that's an effective approach?

04:11 Rachel

First of all, I just wanted to give the caveat that I don't think I'm the sole holder of Capital T truth. But I do know what has worked for me. So anything I share is something that has a proof of concept of at least one.

Having said that, one of the things that I've struggled with is getting stuff done. I love ideas. I love playing. I love experimenting. And I also get distracted by the next idea. And it's been kind of frustrating, because I had difficulty figuring out, "Okay, yes, but I want to get over there. How do I get over there?"

So since, as I mentioned with my childhood, I had that interesting relationship with, I guess, the observer of watching myself and how I do things. What I started doing is documenting, "Okay, what helps me move forward?"

And what I discovered is that there are all these different aspects of letting go of stories, of figuring out what it is that you want, of putting plans into action, of coming up with the plans, how do you monitor your progress to make sure you're actually doing what you want to do? How do you stay motivated when you really don't feel like doing the stuff that you know is going to move you forward? How do you make sure you have regular assessments to make sure you actually are on the right track?

So what I did is I came up with these eight different areas that provided a structure and a system for all the areas where I had gotten stuck.

06:03 Kathy

When you're in the routine of life and you're trying to envision something that's beyond where you currently are, how can you use this framework? What are some of the things



that you can do to begin to create a vision that's beyond your current life, you know, the way you're living at the moment?

06:22 Rachel

Well, the first thing is to notice if you're dissatisfied. Because let's face it, there are a lot of people who are perfectly happy doing the same thing that they've been doing. So I don't want to say that everybody needs to shake things up. Because if you're happy, then that's great.

But what I find is that a lot of people put a lot of energy into climbing that ladder, only to discover it's leaning on the wrong building. And they get to a certain level and realize this isn't what I thought it was. This is not fulfilling. This doesn't motivate me. What would be really satisfying for me personally?

The first step, even before going into your vision, is figuring out what things are you doing because you think you should be doing them and that are habits or expectations from other people. And really sit down and connect with, "Okay, am I doing this because it's really my path and it's exciting and motivating, or am I doing it because I think I should?"

it's hard to create your own vision unless you recognize what's not yours first. After you go through and say, "You know, these things don't really click with me, they don't resonate, they are not congruent with my energy." And when I say the word *energy*, it's very amorphous, but in this context I'm using it as something that makes you want to get out of bed in the morning, that's kind of my goal.

Now once you're looking for what makes you want to get out of bed in the morning, I would look at how you respond to the things around you. One of the things that I found is that if there is, say, a person who you feel really drawn to, just whenever you see them in the news or in person if it's someone you know, there's just something about them that's very attractive, that tugs at you. Generally, that is an indication that there is something inside of your self that wants to come out in the world.

And it's that recognition. Unfortunately if you look at pop culture and music and movies and whatnot, so many of them focus on, "Oh, you're the person that completes me," and putting that effort on that other person. And while there is a lot to be said for partnership, I



think it discounts that sometimes what you need to do is become the person you want to be with, to really encourage that part of you that wants to express itself in the world. Because it is clamoring, saying, "Hey, you can be more, you can be more than what you had thought.

09:27 Kathy

It's great advice. It's been said, especially in the writing world, that people who want to be writers but are fearful, usually wind up opening up cafes where writers can come or hosting open mic nights - anything but picking up the pen.

And I think that happens in a lot of cases, that we put ourselves in support roles. And sometimes that's great. It's a great way to learn.

Rachel

It is.

Kathy

But doing it in a way that is almost, it's a disservice to allowing this to come out. So I love the way you're saying that you actually become the person that you are aspiring to either meet or be with. Maybe there's something there for you too.

10:09 Rachel

Oh, definitely. And if I can just touch on the writer thing. I dabble in fiction under a different name. And one of the things that I've found is when I start hanging out with writers more that I like and aspire to and whatnot, leave reviews for them, there comes a certain point that does energize me for that interaction.

But you are 100% correct that, beyond that point, it's like, you know, I gotta get out there, I've got to do more writing. There's something in my self that wants to go beyond seeking approval from others and wants to simply be congruent in my own life,

10:58 Kathy

Or living up to expectations that may or may not be yours.

Rachel



Exactly.

Kathy

Well, along with your fiction under a pen name, you also do some nonfiction. And another book that you wrote was called, *Rituals of Release, How to Make Room for Your New Life*, which is a wonderful title.

So I know from reading it that you're a proponent of intentionally releasing what no longer serves us. So can you talk a little bit about that and why it's a good practice?

11:30 Rachel

Well, it touches back a little bit on what we mentioned earlier, of climbing the ladder. And it is possible that you have been doing things that have been highly effective and have gotten you to this point. And then you look around, it's like, "Okay, I want to get further." But the things that have supported you in the past aren't going to get you further.

And one of the reasons why I believe it's important to do a deliberate release of these is because part of that release is appreciation. They have gotten you here, they have supported you. Some of these things may be absolutely wonderful. And it can be hard to say goodbye. There may even be a touch of grief involved with it. Because there is so much attached to what has gone on.

I mean, if I can bring in my own experience. When I left my day job in order to really work with *The Fullness of Your Power* full time, there was that excitement about moving forward. But there was a poignancy to it. Because that job was the culmination of 19 years of evolution, of my life, of who I had become over that span of almost two decades.

And because I took the time to acknowledge that, to embrace the experience, and to lovingly say goodbye and thank you, it made stepping into my new role much freer. And it released the energy of the past in a way that didn't discount it, but that allowed me to move to that next level.

13:44 Kathy



You speak about this in a way that's honoring of the experiences, not - "It was wrong. It was a mistake. I wasted my time." It's like, "No, it actually got you to this point in awareness," which I think is really wonderful.

And in your book, you talk about letting go of what's not yours. And I love that term. So can you talk a little bit about that and how that can weigh us down?

14:11 Rachel

Yeah. Well, as I mentioned, we take on other people's stuff and a lot of it goes all the way back to childhood. When we're little, we're trying to figure out who we are and how we fit in the world. Human beings are social creatures. We get that information, at least in part, based upon our interactions with others.

Unfortunately, when we're really little, sometimes even pre-verbal, we do not have the context to understand anything that doesn't revolve around us. We think everything revolves around us and that this is the way the world is.

I had also mentioned that our understandings are stories. They're things we make up in order to make sense. So we can go through our entire lives thinking that we know how the world works, when the truth is that we're just aware of certain patterns that we recognize and we think are replicated. And we think that is the totality of the world.

So the first step is awareness. Like I mentioned, where the first step before is, if you are dissatisfied, the first step in letting go of stuff that's not really yours is, again, that sense of incongruence, where it's not really clicking.

I'm very kinesthetic, I recognize that as a constriction, it feels like something is folding in on myself. I happen to be very empathic. I refer to it as *chameleon energy*, because it is very easy for me to take on other people's stuff. And a lot of my motivation is I want other people to feel comfortable. So when I'm with them, I kind of pull in those parts of myself that don't really fit the situation so that they feel comfortable.

This is not in and of itself a bad thing. The problem is when we think we have to fold ourselves in on ourselves, rather than choosing to highlight those aspects of ourselves that are appropriate to each situation.



Because let's face it, we have that chameleon energy, we experience different situations. You are going to act differently when you are in a business meeting, as opposed to when you're hanging out with your friends on a Saturday (whenever we get to hang out with our friends again (laughs)).

But the thing is, that is a natural part of the process. The part that becomes damaging and constricting is if you're doing it out of fear. If you think, "Well, I have to be this way or else things will be awful. People will not approve."

I actually I'd like to expand on the *people will not approve* thing. Because a lot of times I mentioned I work with people pleasers, there is that gut fear that if people are disappointed or don't like what we do or who we are. It's a gut reaction that again goes back to childhood.

If mommy comes home and she yells at you, you think, "Oh my god, I'm being loud, there's something wrong." And if you're only two or three years old, that fear is survival based. If your parents don't take care of you, they can put you on the curb and you would die. This isn't necessarily understood on an intellectual basis. But on a gut level, it feels like survival.

Again, you're three years old, you don't know that your mom just got in a fight with a co-worker and the car was acting up on the way home and she's not sure she has the money to pay to get the transmission fixed and all this stuff. And you just happened to do something that set it off. But you don't know that. All you know is that, "Mom doesn't like me, I'm going to die."

18:41

This is why, as adults, if you find yourself getting caught in patterns, where you're,

the word that comes to mind is subservient. If you're constantly giving in, if you're doing things to make other people happy, to placate them or something like that, and you're watching yourself do this and thinking, "Why am I doing this? I know it's not necessary. But I'm still acting this way and it can be so frustrating."





It's okay. Because the part of you that's acting is not the adult. So the response is to step into the shoes of the adult and give your little you a hug and just go in and say, "Hey, it's okay. I'm here. You're safe. You are loved."

When I talk about what I do, the phrase I use is, "I help people embrace all parts of themselves." And I use that word *embrace* intentionally. A lot of people talk about the necessity of loving yourself. But love is such an abstract word. It means different things to different people. I can go into all sorts of definitions.

But the word embrace has a specific sense where you are holding all the parts of yourself that have been judged, that have been set aside, that are afraid. And when you hold those parts in your arms, not only do you reassure them that it's okay, but it also emphasizes that right now, you are the adult. You do have power. You may not know how to access it, but it's there. You can make a choice. You can survive the consequences of that choice. You can survive people not liking you, people not approving of you.

But that first step is simply the awareness that it's okay to be yourself. It's okay to say no. It's okay to be.

21:06 Kathy

And another item that you suggest letting go, it's okay to fail. It reminded me of a poem from Antonio Machado. I'm going to paraphrase here, but he says something to the effect of, "Last night as I was sleeping, golden bees were making white combs and sweet honey from my old failures."

Rachel

Mmmmmmm

Kathy

And I always loved that because, you know, getting back to your point on helping people with their stories, how do we work with them and create an empowering story from some of our failures?

21:44 Rachel



Well, it's easier if you go into a situation with the expectation that it is a learning experience. Michael Bungay Stanier has an absolutely beautiful coaching question which I adore. And the question is: "Even if nothing about this goes the way that you want, what about it would still be worth doing?" So that would set the intention going and say, "Okay, what can I notice? What can I gain from this, even if it doesn't have the results that I would like?"

Now the second part is, yeah, it's easier if you go in that way. But what happens if you've already done it and fail, because the first thing is to look at the word fail. And the fail means, "Did not achieve the hope that you had intended."

So there it's, just be honest, this did not do what you wanted it to do. In this situation, grief may be appropriate. Because a lot of times, it's not just this one thing. It's what this thing meant, what you had hoped would come because of this thing. If it were a stepping stone to what's next, and if you had this whole vision of, "Well, I'm going to do this and then this and then this is going to happen and then this is going to happen." And then all of these wonderful things are going to open up in your life.

If that first thing didn't happen, then that whole future is gone. I'm not saying other things won't happen. But if you had this picture that this is the way it was going to go, it is not going to go that way. And that deserves, as you mentioned, honoring. Honor the dream, honor what you had wanted, and grieve that it is not going to be that way.

I happen to think grief is a deliberate. I think grief has a purpose. We know that everything's ephemeral, that we don't have control over everything. On some level, we know that sometimes things happen.

I have the cover of I think it was *Time Magazine*, it was the week that he died. And the reason I kept it was not because of Richard Nixon. The reason is because up in the corner was a little tiny picture of Boris Yeltsin. And that tiny picture was an exclusive interview with the new head of Russia. And you know, that Yeltsin's PR people had spent months putting together this front page *Time* article expose on the new head of Russia and all of this stuff. And then Nixon had to go and die that week. (Kathy laughs) Things happen. You do not have control over everything.



But at the same time, you need to have dreams, you need to have goals. If you want to live a truly exciting, adventurous, meaningful life, those are driven by dreams and goals. But those are two opposite things. And I believe that the way that as humans, we've reconciled wanting to plan the future and knowing it may not happen as grief.

And the purpose of grief is to give us these moments when we have failed, when things haven't worked out, to reconcile, to honor, to express sorrow over the dreams that have died. Because they are not going to happen the way that we saw them.

If our dreams give us branches, it's our sorrows that give us roots. They deepen our connection with something larger, they ground us. One of my favorite quotes, Khalil Gibran, "The deeper that sorrow carves into my soul, the greater my capacity for joy." And I believe that is how we live our best lives.

26:54 Kathy

A beautiful description of the purpose of grief. And what I love about that, is it, it doesn't deny the feelings. And certainly we have all had lots of opportunities over the last 18 months or so, and I'm really curious to get your thoughts on the impact of, I used to say 2020, but now it's 2020/21, and some of the themes that you may be seeing emerging from your work and from your clients.

27:26 Rachel

What the biggest thing is, how long can you carry uncertainty? Because I talk about, "Okay, you have a dream, it doesn't work, you grieve, you move forward." That's kind of the process. What do you do when that's happening on a weekly or a daily basis? It's exhausting.

And I think that's a lot of what we're seeing where people are holding onto, "Well, next week it'll be better," or, "In the fall, we can do this," or... And then it's like, "Well, no, there's this other thing."

One of the reasons that I wrote *Rituals of Release* is because I had seen that so much weight, again, this is using myself as an example and then seeing it with my clients and with, just in general. A lot of the weight that we carry is not necessarily something big, but



it's the accumulation of lots of tiny things. So we need to have some sort of regular cleaning system to address all these little tiny things, so they don't stick on us.

Now I wrote this before COVID hit. And I believe that the points I made have become exponentially more valid, because there's just so much stuff getting stuck. So the way to deal with it is to become just rigorous in self-care, rigorous in setting up daily routines where you try to clear things out.

I, myself, used to be very guilty of first thing in the morning, reaching for my phone, what is going on in social media. Oh my goodness, that's exhausting. That is a terrible way to start the day because it's all other people's stuff. Even the good stuff is other people's stuff.

So it's necessary to be deliberate about your choices. Knowing that there is an awful lot of stuff out there. There's a lot of fear. There is a lot of anger. I happen to think those are the same thing, just different expressions. But it is really important to understand that little things matter.

Stephen Covey talks about the concentric circles. He describes it as two circles where you have your Circle of Influence and then surrounding that and including that is your Circle of Concern. Now that Circle of Concern is everything you care about. And there's an awful lot of stuff to care about. But inside that smaller circle is your Circle of Influence, what do you personally have power over.

And one of the neat things, when I talk about little things matter, the more you focus on what it is that you personally can do, you find the more you can do. And that inner circle expands because you have more energy, you feel better, and your vision expands so you can see more of what you can do. The flip side of that is if you put too much energy in all of these things you don't have control over, then that inner circle shrinks and you feel like you can't do anything and you become overwhelmed.

Therefore, it's important to identify, what is one thing that you can do, personally, that only affects you that are your personal habits – what you choose, even, it's something simple as I'm going to make an effort to actually stay hydrated today. I'm going to drink enough water. When things get too much, I'm going to go outside and just go for a walk around



the block and look at the sky. I'm going to try to shake it off and reconnect and just breathe.

This, interestingly enough, goes back to where, earlier in our conversation, we were talking about how to identify what it is that you are here to do, what you want to do, what to bring out. In this situation, if there are things that really bug you about other people, you should do this, they should be doing that, they are horrible... that is often an indication where you yourself are not an integrity.

32:27

So if you notice yourself pointing a lot of fingers at other people who should be doing this, take a deep breath back up and say, "Okay, hold on. I cannot control other people's actions. But is there something that my reaction is telling me that I can change about myself? Is there something inside of me that I'm afraid to let out? Am I afraid that I am not capable of stepping up?"

And what if I make the effort to do so? What can I personally do to feel better? To make the situation better? Even if it's just... be a little extra nicer to the checker at the grocery store, something that helps, that you personally can do, and from there, you can change the spiral into an upward one of empowerment.

33:39 Kathy

Yeah. Or even a little bit nicer to yourself.

Rachel

Oh, yeah.

33:44 Kathy

That's wonderful advice. I wonder if you'd entertain a philosophical question.

Rachel

Oh, certainly.

Kathy



I know that there's going to be uncertainty for a long time. But give us 10-15 years in the future, as we look back, how do you think we'll see this time?

34:05 Rachel

I think we will see it as a time of great transition. We are not going to go back to the old normal, it is not going to happen. What I mean, looking at how many people are quitting their jobs because they realized, you know, life is too short. Things are going to change.

I see it as, well, when a caterpillar turns into a butterfly, it does not just grow wings. It has to completely transform and break down into goo before it can change into something that can fly. And I think what we are experiencing right now is that breakdown and I am personally holding onto hope that something more sustainable, more human, more alive will grow from the goo. (laughs)

35:14 Kathy

Perfect, it was a great answer. We normally wrap up these sessions with some personal questions for our listeners to be able to get a sense of who you are and some suggestions of things they can read or look into further.

So one of our first questions that leads right into what you were saying about we're going to be in this for a while: How do you keep yourself well? What are some of your favorite practices for staying well in these times?

35:44 Rachel

I love my morning walks. It's just out of the house, looking up at the trees and the sky and listening to birds. And physical movement, trying to shake everything off and reconnect to what's important. And to me, what's important is love.

I actively send love to my neighbors, to my family, to being a channel for something more than myself. Reconnecting with faith. Having that faith that it will be okay. Whatever okay means and understanding my okay includes grief and sorrow.

When you're talking about my routines, starting my day clearing things out and trying to have that foundation is really important. Being present and open. Trying my best to be able to connect with other human beings. Being there for others helps me be there for



myself. Because when I am open, and my description of being a channel for love, nothing else matters. And it helps ground me and center. And it helps others as well.

37:21 Kathy

How about something that you've read or listened to lately that you enjoyed?

37:28 Rachel

I recently read a fantasy novel called *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* by Victoria Schwab. And it is a story of a young woman who was born in the tail end of 17th century France, whose father took her to market when she was six and she loved seeing all the people and the world and it was so exciting. And then when she was 12, her mother said, "Okay, that's enough. Now we get to prepare you to get married."

And she did not want that life. And she was in her early 20s and a farmer in the neighborhood, had six kids and his wife died. And her mom said, "Okay, you're gonna marry him now."

And she said, "I don't think so." And she ran off to the woods and she prayed for deliverance, not realizing that dusk had fallen. And the wise witchy woman of the village had told her never pray to the gods that come out after dark. And she had not noticed dark had fallen.

And she prayed to not be bound to other people. She didn't want to live the life that everybody else was trying to map out for her. She did not want to constantly be trying being other people's expectations. And he granted her wish. She became immortal, but no one would ever remember her.

To the extent that she ran into her best friend the next day. Her friend had no idea who she was, but through good Christian charity invited her in, washed her feet. The baby started crying. So her friend said "Here, hold this. Ah, my husband's at the door."

And the friend went to the door to let her husband know that she had found this girl. And she got to the door and was like, "What?" and then turned around and said, "Who are you and why do you have my child?" and was absolutely terrified.



So this story is about how Addie learned to live life in each moment. She ended up leaving her mark as an artist's muse, where she would share ideas and things. There was a series of paintings of this mysterious woman and nobody knew who she was, all of these things. And even it comes through to the early 20th century and she's 300 years old and still learning how to live each moment with wonder and appreciation for life.

40:23 Kathy

Wow. I will link that up in the show notes. That sounds like an amazing, amazing ride. And speaking of rides, envision your perfect road trip. Where do you go? What do you do?

40:37 Rachel

Oh my goodness. When I graduated from university, I got a Eurail pass and just jetted around Europe, going from place to place with some idea, but not real plans. And I love that sense of serendipity. Me, husband, kids – pack up. Where do we want to see, what do we want to experience? And have enough spaciousness to actually stop that weird little roadside thing with the dinosaurs or something that just looks cool, because it would be fun to do so.

41:18 Kathy

Love it. I love it. And then lastly, what has you optimistic about the future?

41:25 Rachel

People. My kids. So much strife, socially and politically, is from people making assumptions and accusations about what they think other people are like. But I have found every single person that I have spoken with to be a human being. And we all want a better world for our kids. We all have fears, we all have dreams.

And I believe for all that media says that, this is horrible and this and that and the other and plays up the strife, I look at my community and we help each other. When it comes down to it, we help each other. And I believe that that is the energy that is going to get us through.

42:31 Kathy

Here, here. Yes. So tell me Rachel, I'm sure our listeners will want to get in touch with you. What's the best way to be able to reach you?





42:40 Rachel

The best way is through my website, TheFullnessOfYourPower.com. I have links there to resources, my articles, other podcasts, my books. And you can reach out through my contact form or social media, but everything's linked on there.

42:59 Kathy

Perfect. Perfect. Well, thank you so much for a beautiful conversation. I really appreciate you being here, Rachel, thank you.

43:04 Rachel

Thank you. This has been lovely.

43:09

Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

If you'd like to access the show notes, have a question you'd like addressed on a future episode, or would like a transcript of this episode, visit [www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast](http://www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast).

Until next time, be well!