



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 082 – Creating Common Ground 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 Kathy

Hello and welcome to Episode 82. Thanks so much for joining me for this shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

Today I'm joined, once again, by author Rachel S. Heslin, who shares her thoughts on how to find safe space and common ground for dialogue in times of conflict.

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

01:03 Kathy

Once again, I'm joined by author and founder of The Fullness of Your Power, Rachel Heslin. Welcome back, Rachel.

Rachel

Hello there.

Kathy

So you know the last time we talked, you gave us so many good points to ponder. And I would love to get your thoughts on how we find common ground. How do we find safe space for dialogue in these times?

01:26 Rachel



Well, one of the things that I've personally found effective is focusing on what I am *for*. A lot of people talk about what they are against - "We have to prevent this, we have to fight against this." And right there, you're setting up conflict.

But at the point that I talk about, "This is what I want to promote in the world," it becomes a lot easier finding that common ground.

Just on another note, I'm also president of The Mountain Healing Arts Association, which is just a small local group of practitioners in the area where I live. And there are some very strong opinions about things. And it has been challenging. Because one of my visions for The Mountain Healing Arts Association is creating that safe space so that people have somewhere that they can go and just breathe, have a respite from all the turmoil in the outside world.

So really being ruthless about saying, "We are going to talk about what we do want, what is it we want to create? What is the world we want to live in? And how can we do this in a way that respects others? And how do we work together to create a larger picture of how we want to live?"

03:01 Kathy

And how have you found that? How does that work in the "real world?" Is it effective? What's the response to that?

03:12 Rachel

It is effective, but it's a lot of work. It can be exhausting, because part of the acknowledgement is acknowledging "the anti's" - the anti this, the anti that, whatever, in a way that is respectful of them, without giving either a positive or a negative to the expressed reaction.

It's done in terms of, "I see you feel very strongly about this. What would you like to see instead?" So acknowledge the experience and then shift the expression into "What would you like instead?"

And I have to admit, it has been a learning experience for me as well. Because when I talk about my chameleon energy and the empathy and all that sort of thing, I used to be very



much about validation – validating how other people are feeling. And that in and of itself became constricting.

I was actually at a family reunion where it wasn't the most cordial of things going on. And I discovered that as a chameleon, I could not validate all of these opposing experiences. So what I learned to do is change the concept of validation into radical allowing.

I am not saying it's either good or bad that you think and feel the way you do. I am simply allowing you your experience. And that sense of allowing is something that other people respond to.

Because if I judge against, then there's that need to defend and it becomes more constricted. If I judge in favor, then anyone who doesn't share that feeling, they feel a need to defend.

But if I simply allow, that shifts the energy of the conversation into, "Okay, it is what it is."

Kathy

There's a neutrality.

Rachel

And there is an opening. Yes, it is that neutrality, which then can be deliberately shifted to, "What is positive? What can we work towards together?"

06:04 Kathy

I heard something really interesting. The ability to use AI to build empathy.

So what is it like in a refugee camp? What is it like trying to get to a different country? What is it like being in a country when it's not your country of origin?

Rachel

Yeah.

Kathy



To have the ability to switch, you know, being in different people's shoes. What would that do if we not only had the ability, but people were interested in learning in that way? And I thought that was a really fascinating idea.

06:40 Rachel

Are you familiar with The Humans of New York?

Kathy

No.

Rachel

I highly recommend it. I'm pretty sure they have their own website, but it's primarily a Facebook page that has been going on for years. It started out, a gentleman was taking pictures of people in New York. And then he started taking pictures of people and asking them their stories. Could be a couple of sentences, could be a few paragraphs.

And they talk about all walks of life, so many different experiences. The ex-con trying to turn his life around, the school teacher who doesn't have enough funding and is dealing with the possibility of school shootings, so many different people.

And a few years back, he actually went to Syria and the refugee camps. And he did a series of photographs and interviews there; he did immigrants here. And the whole thing is you see these faces and you hear their stories and they become human. I highly recommend checking it out.

08:04 Kathy

I've actually seen an interview with him. I'm probably the only person in the world that is not on Facebook, so that's why it has eluded my view, but I know who you're talking about. And I will link that up in the show notes. Thank you.

08:18 Rachel

It is absolutely brilliant that he can capture humanity in such a concise manner so that you feel it.

08:32 Kathy



Mm hmm, that is the hope for the future, my friend.

Rachel
Oh it is.

Kathy
Yeah, and thank you again, so much for being here. I really appreciate it.

08:39 Rachel
Thank you so much for inviting me.

08:43
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.

Until next time, be well!