



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 086 – The Connection Method with Melinda Livingstone
November 3, 2021

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

00:41 Kathy

Today I'm joined, once again, by innovation coach Melinda Livingstone, who shares a bit more about her process on how she coaches new clients through the business ideation process.

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

01:00 Kathy

Once again, I'm joined by innovation coach, Melinda Livingstone. Welcome back, Melinda.

Melinda

Hey, Kathy, thank you so much for having me. It's great to be here.

Kathy

So what I'd love to talk about in this shortened episode is I love your coaching approach. It's a mix of your innovation background and innovation process and personal reflection.



And so I wanted to role play a little bit. Let's pretend it's 2017 and I'm a client that comes to you and says, "I've been in corporate for over 30 years and I'm thinking about going out on my own." How would you begin to walk me through the process?

01:41 Melinda

Yeah, that is such a great question. So I use a process called The Connection Method. And what I do is I encourage people to reflect deeply on their skills and their experiences and their abilities. And this includes a process of self-empathy. What parts of their career history have really energized them? When have they found flow and meaning?

And I also encourage them to reflect on empathy for others, problems that they want to solve or causes and topics that they feel really passionate about. So perhaps while they were working, they saw groups of customers who were underserved or people that they saw whose needs weren't being met or people that they really enjoyed helping.

Because we bring so much to the table. And often our best business opportunities are a combination of all of these work experiences, but also our life experiences as well. It's really the whole person we bring to our business.

People will send me their survey in advance of the meeting and I'll go through that. I'll have a look at their LinkedIn profile, because there's probably some gems there too. And then I help people with the idea validation process as well. And then also with the market testing, their business model canva, which is a business plan on a page, and a go to market strategy.

03:01 Kathy

That's incredibly comprehensive. I wonder what my reaction would have been back in 2017. Looking back now, this really resonates, this idea of building a prototype and to be able to test it.

Can you give an example from your experience with your clients of what that might look like? So somebody may have an interest in wellness and maybe has some personal experience with running or with nutrition, but has been in a completely different type of experience. What are some ways that that person might be able to test some of these ideas out?



Melinda

So what it would be is to start putting ideas on a page and map out several concepts. Maybe four or five different concepts and just start talking to people about these concepts and narrowing them down. What concepts are resonating with people and what is a valuable problem to solve? Because, ultimately, it needs to be a good fit for us, but it also needs to be a valuable problem for our customer as well. And then going through that process, clarity starts to form.

And the prototyping you mentioned is really, really important. So prototypes can be, if it's, say a coaching program or something like that, the prototype can be something really simple, just like a single web page that can be shown to people and say, "You know, if I was to launch this business, would this appeal to you? How much would you pay for it? What would you be looking to get for it? How would you like to buy it? Where would you like to buy it?"

04:47

And just start to gather feedback in a really safe test and learn way. Because also it's important that we don't get too attached to our ideas. And if people say, "Oh, that's not what I'm looking for, I'd rather have such and such," then you can say, "Yep, that's great." And then come back to them the next time and say, "Okay, last time you said you weren't looking for this. Is this more what you're looking for?" And it's a really iterative testing approach.

05:13 Kathy

Well, there's so much there. One, as you were talking, I'm seeing this Venn diagram of whether or not the entrepreneur has the desire to provide the service and the need. And you need both of them. You need to find that overlap for it to be a viable business option.

Melinda

Absolutely.

Kathy

We can get all excited about our passions and our desires, but somebody needs to be on the other end to be able to purchase this.



Melinda

Pay for it! Yeah, absolutely.

Kathy

Exactly. And then this idea of simplicity. So when you talk about putting this simple webpage up, it does so much. Not only are we able to test the business idea, but the person's getting out there and having those conversations and it's a low impact. Because if there's rejection, it's like, "Okay, I just go back to the drawing board. I didn't put a lot of time and energy into it."

I think that's incredibly brilliant to set people through that, that early in the process. I think that's really wise.

Do you have any, as we come to a close here, for anybody that's, this is starting to stir some ideas, or they're starting to get a little excited, can you speak to the value of being able to take your future and put it in your own hands and have that autonomy to say, "This is the way I want to live my life." Can you give some words of wisdom as we close out today?

Melinda

Yeah, absolutely. It's such a powerful thing to live your life on your own terms, to plot your own path. I think, you know, when we're working in a corporate, we can sometimes feel that we're working towards other people's goals, that we're fulfilling other people's dreams, that we're meeting other people's needs.

And there comes a time in our life when we think, "Hey, you know, I want to achieve things for myself as well." And having your own business gives us that opportunity to have that agency over our own lives and to help other people to fulfill our own purpose, to pursue our own goals and to have that impact on the world that we want to have, to work towards the causes that are truly important to ask to fulfill our dreams.

And so starting a business is just this great opportunity. And it's just so easy to do these days. It's never been easier than now to start a business.



So, if your listeners are thinking of starting a business, just give it a go. Don't die wandering.

Kathy

Mmmm. Beautiful. Hear, hear! Thank you so much, Melinda, for being with us today. Really appreciate it.

Melinda

Thank you, Kathy. It's just been such a pleasure. And you're doing such great work with this podcast.

07:57

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.

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Until next time, be well!