



**The Athena Wellness Podcast**  
**Episode 153 – The Mechanics of Transformation with Jonathan Varkul**  
**October 2, 2022**

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**[00:00:05] Kathy Robinson:** 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.

**[00:00:30] Kathy:** Today's episode is brought to you by The Athena Wellness Academy, your resource for wholehearted living.

The Academy's featured offering is an online course called, *From 'Type A' to 'Type Be,' How to Mindfully Descend the Corporate Ladder and Invite What's Next*. This course is perfect for you if you're contemplating or navigating a professional transition, and it's available as a self study or with a small cohort of students facilitated by me, Kathy Robinson.

To learn more, I invite you to go to [AthenaWellnessAcademy.teachable.com](https://AthenaWellnessAcademy.teachable.com) or click on the link in the show notes.

**[00:01:21] Kathy:** Hello and welcome. Thanks so much for joining me.



You know how much I love a good head-to-heart story. And this one will not disappoint. It's about the tension between looking like you have it all externally but being on the brink of burnout internally. It's about taking the time to truly answer the question, *Who am I?* and the impact of that exercise. And it's about how someone's life experience can turn into their life's work.

I'm joined today by facilitator and coach, Jonathan Varkul, who helps leaders and their teams effectively navigate challenges where the path forward is unclear. In fact, the tagline on Jonathan's website is, "A dose of clarity in a noisy world." I just love that.

I'll leave it to Jonathan to tell his story, but I'll preface it by saying he's not your ordinary coach. In fact, his coaching practice emerged from his own efforts to integrate all the different aspects of himself into an authentic expression.

What followed was a reintroduction of sorts, getting to know himself, and then creating a coaching practice where he could help others create a deep connection with themselves in order to holistically navigate their relationships, work and world.

Here's what we cover:

- Jonathan's compelling Type A to Type B journey;
- Addressing the void caused by internal and external misalignment;
- The cause of burnout and what to do about it;



- Taking a leap and creating a new identity; and
- How to utilize the head to heart journey in the business world.

You can learn more about Jonathan at [jonathanvarkul.com](http://jonathanvarkul.com). And I'll put a link to his website in the show notes.

And now onto the show. I hope you enjoy the conversation.

**[00:03:26] Kathy:** Jonathan, welcome to The Athena Wellness Podcast. Thank you so much for being here today.

**[00:03:32] Jonathan Varkul:** Thanks for having me, Kathy.

**[00:03:34] Kathy:** Please, share a bit about who you are and what you do today.

**[00:03:38] Jonathan:** I'm an executive coach. Typically, I work with leaders and their teams mostly when they're having challenges. The challenges are specifically where they're struggling to find a path forward, the path forward isn't clear. So, the specifics of the challenge aren't as intriguing or relevant as much as the fact that whatever is happening, the path forward isn't clear. The work I do is all about helping them become clear about something that they can't see.

**[00:04:10] Kathy:** So normally when we become coaches and we're working with things like challenges and not seeing the way forward, it usually has something to do with our own personal experiences [laughs]. And, you know, we talk a lot, and we have been talking a lot, about going from this Type A personality of trying to



think your way through to more of a Type Be personality where you're feeling your way through. It feels like you've walked that path from head to heart.

You've, I know, have been a management consultant, you've been a traveler, you've been an actual executive, the folks that you're helping now, and now you're a coach. Can you tell us a bit about that journey and what you've learned along the way?

**[00:04:51] Jonathan:** Yeah. Interestingly enough, I have described it to some people a little bit like-- well, I've been doing this for 12 years. I would describe it as when I first started the executive coaching practice as a little bit like a caterpillar getting into a chrysalis, and then putting a sign on the outside that says, "Executive Coach." Then using that as the basis for my own coming to terms with myself and getting clear on something.

It's been quite an amazing journey to, first of all, be able to have my vocation and be the very nourishment that I really need for my own self-fulfillment in life. Now, that certainly wasn't a big chunk of my life for the first 41 odd years or 40 odd years of my life. I was going in a different direction, there wasn't a chrysalis, and the focus was mostly external as a reference point for "How am I doing?"

One of the things, I guess, we all like to do is fit in and connect with the world and be a part of things to feel safe, feel like we belong. I think what I did, and maybe what most people do, is we use the world around us to give us feedback on how we're doing.



So I never really considered that how I am internally is actually relevant to that equation. It was always, "Well, how am I appearing to do externally to those around me, given the feedback they're giving me as to how I am?"

I think what happened was around mid-life, I remember having this moment where I thought, "Well, I'm kind of doing quite well, but if I carry on for another 40 years and carry on that path or trajectory of big house, more success in the typical kinds of ways, and I feel the same as what I feel now, which doesn't feel any different than I felt 20 years ago, then something will have gone awfully wrong, and I would have left something on the table in some way, and I would have missed something."

That was a bit of a wake-up call because I always thought that I would feel different by the time I got the things I had. And I didn't. So that set me into a place of, if you talk about lack of clarity, a sense of, well, I don't know where to go from here because everything that I had ever utilized as a way to move forward was all externally referencing, whether it was doing well in school, graduating, getting married, how many kids. Whatever I had done was always looking at it from that perspective, and this didn't seem to be a part of that path.

**[00:07:35] Kathy:** I'm writing a bunch of notes here. You had mentioned something about "vocation as nourishment." They may be my words, but that was kind of the idea, which I just love.

The fact that you sensed something was off and didn't have the words, there seems to be this misalignment between how you were feeling inside and what you



were experiencing in your external world. To your point, you were successful, people were viewing you as successful, but that has to be a really strong impulse to want to follow that further.

Can you speak a little bit more about when it became more than just this gnaw at you and it became something that you really needed to examine?

**[00:08:18] Jonathan:** Well, I was the head of operations for an organization. And in my last year working there, I spent a year actually mostly just journaling, writing, trying to figure out what it is that I want to do "next." Because that's typically how the path always went. In my head, it was, "Well, the reason I'm feeling the way I feel must be because I'm unfulfilled in my job, I have to find the next job, I have to do the next thing, or maybe it's the next career. What's that next thing?"

I spent a lot of time trying to figure that out while I was working. Actually, it was interesting, they were building this wonderful building across the street. Now this beautiful office with this wonderful glass wall that looked out over the street, and it was the TIFF Bell Lightbox building where they do the film festival in Toronto, it's the base. They were building this building. It was beautiful.

They started with the foundation, and I would just have my chair turned out and staring at the back of the wall. That tells you where my head was at. I was watching these folks just build this building. What was crazy was, a year later, that building was finished and I wasn't anywhere clearer as to where I wanted to be. And it became clear that they had built the building and I still haven't figured it out, I'm not going to figure it out sitting here, working the way I am.



So the first thing was, "Well, I think I need to quit my job, not knowing where I'm going to go next because maybe it's what I need. I don't need to be here. I need to be somewhere else doing something else, and maybe that will be the impetus of figuring it out." And so the first piece was just a sense of, "Well, let me say goodbye to what it is that I've got here in the context of work."

That was actually a really crazy scary/almost weirdly mildly euphoric experience. It brought up a lot in terms of release of all kinds of feelings in the process of actually going through with that. Knowing that I had a family and I was the breadwinner in the family and still also needed to indulge whatever this was. So I found a way to extricate myself with a little bit of a package and some runaway to be able to give myself a bit of a breather and I think I gave myself about six months.

So I thought, "Okay, I'm going to be at home." And when I was at home my wife, in a well-meaning way and well-intentioned, was trying to help me figure this out. As she got involved in trying to help me figure it out, what became apparent is that the dynamic between us really was completely off. There was something really off, like that even wasn't going to help me figure this out, something else was needed. That became apparent and soon that started to show signs of real breakage or fractures. Not that long afterwards, we actually separated.

So I found myself sitting in this little rental, not owning my home anymore, with my kids visiting part-time, not really with a title of any kind. I had no identity that I used to speak of, which was, "Oh, I'm this Vice-President of operations here, and I'm this parent to these kids, and we're married, and we have this place. This is who I am."



Which is interesting because it becomes a nice segue to what we spoke about on spirituality and one of the deepest questions in spirituality is, "Who am I?" That became the journey where I ended up sitting on this couch really staring out across the street at this huge tree that was there. I spent-- I can't tell you how-- long periods of time just staring out at this tree and really reading deeper books on spirituality to try and see, define an answer to whatever it is that's ailing me. Recognizing that while I'm doing this, there's a clock ticking that I have to earn money too.

So I actually took myself off to Ireland, [laughs] of all places. It was during March, so it's still pretty cold in Ireland. I was at this wonderful bed and breakfast. It was a wonderful fire going. I was eating these wonderful little Digestive biscuits they have with chocolate on the top and a cup of tea, a very Irish experience.

It's a very cool experience. I was just loving it. I was reading this book and I was cozying up, getting my yummy on, given the fact that I needed some soothing given this experience I'm having. I read this line in a book which said, "To see the Divine amongst the whirligig of the quotidian." I just thought to myself, "Well, that's it!" And I didn't know what half of it meant, but I knew that that was it.

So I got up, opened my laptop, googled "what's whirligig, what's quotidian." Turns out that whirligig is just the crazy spinning around of something, something that's spinning around crazy, and quotidian is the ordinary, mundane.

And so to see the Divine amongst the craziness of the mundane is really the very thing I'm looking for. Really felt like, god, that's what I want. Not only do I want that, I





want to be able to connect with that, see that, have that, and then share that as part of what I do, which loosely over time translates into the tagline on my website, which is, "A dose of clarity in a noisy world."

Because for me, it's that access to that moment where you see and connect and touch something that's beyond where you are right now. It invites you into a bigger relationship with the world, with the Universe, with something more than whatever felt possible just a few moments ago.

And so that, in a sense, has been my journey to connect with myself and access that aspect of my relationship with life so that I'm not beholden to a world where I need to find my *special* in order to find my belonging. That I can belong and matter without being special. It's been an interesting journey to go through that experience.

**[00:14:49] Kathy:** Wow, that is such a beautiful story. What I love about that here was this initial leap of faith that you're figuring, "Well, if I could just figure out what's going on in my career, everything will be okay." And it turns out to be like where you thought you were leaping to, there was no bottom there for a while. There was this whole identity shift that was way beyond what you thought it was.

When we see folks on the other side of that, it feels like, "Well, that was easy for that person or that happened very quickly for that person." They don't see all the disintegration that had to happen and the searching and the fact that it was found in the everyday. There's something very Zen about that. There's just



something very “Chop wood, carry water.” It just feels like a nourishing parable. That was really lovely. Thank you so much for sharing that.

I'm curious, if you had the capacity to go back and have a chat with your 20-year-old self, would you change the path or do you think the path you took was necessary to get to the place where you are today?

**[00:15:59] Jonathan:** Well, it certainly was necessary given who I was in the journey, but what would I say to my 20-year-old self would be an interesting thing because my 20-year-old self was an incredibly disconnected person. What I'd say, and what I mean by that is interesting is it's not like I wasn't a nice person. Actually, I was raised to be a really good little boy, so I'm a really nice guy. I play fair and I care about people, all intellectually speaking. But I was disconnected from the experience of what it's like to fully be here, embodied, in the moment, exchanging information.

I didn't have the capacity to be able to experience the sensations of being fully alive in a body. So it was all very intellectual because then I wouldn't have to deal. So what I would probably try to do is help that 20-year-old engage in practices that would bring him more into his body at an earlier stage to become more aware and build the capacity to be able to face and deal with uncomfortable things.

**[00:17:12] Kathy:** Mmmhmmm. Building that resilience, that inner resilience.



You mentioned journaling had a big role in trying to figure out and answer that question of “Who am I?” What other wellness practices or what role did wellness play in this transformative process?

**[00:17:29] Jonathan:** Well, I've had a lot of different experiences over the years that have all been whacks on the side of the head, pointing me in the direction of my body.

For example, the first whack I had was my ex-wife and I actually, before we had kids, we were actually traveling for a year and a half. We quit our jobs, we sold our house, put everything in storage, and literally just traveled around the world for a year and a half.

It was an amazing experience, but just before we were going traveling, I started to get vertigo. Tons of spinning, I would get really nauseous. I would have this vertigo spinning experience for about three days, have to go to an emergency room, and I would be throwing up so much from the vertigo that I had no fluids. And I'd have to get them to put me on an IV to get fluids injected into my body.

What I discovered was I have this thing called Ménière's disease, which is apparently brought on by some kind of inner ear issue. I happened to be deaf in my right ear completely. I was born that way. Just the whole other interesting story.

So what that did was it forced me, because the experience of having these vertigo experiences were so nauseating, I had to find a position, I had to get very into my



body in a sense to start to feel what's that perfect little angle where I could sit for a day or two days without getting totally sick.

Talk about a silent retreat or a meditation, I mean, I'm going to be forced into not being able to move and just be in touch with your body at that level, that was my first real whack to start to recognize at some level that the body's relevant. What was fascinating is that I got into yoga at that point, and then after about a year and a half of yoga practice, that issue just dissipated, it went away.

The next one was many years later we were expecting our second kid and I was now fully in the build of a startup. I was going hardcore. I was working really long hours. I was trying to do everything and be all things to all people. And I started to feel like I was having a heart attack. I remember the first time it happened, I woke up, my wife called the paramedics, they took me off to the hospital.

The guy at the hospital says to me-- by the next morning already after they've run a battery of tests, he says, "Well, I don't know what you've got, but I do know it's not going to kill you right now. We're emergency people and we're only interested in helping you with things that can kill you right now. May kill you, but I can't help you. You need to go find other doctors."

So I went through this process. I had a huge workup of all kinds of things, every organ in my body, and it would all come back with, "There's nothing wrong with you." So I get this diagnosis that there's absolutely nothing wrong with you, but I think that I'm actually dying all the time. So there's something clearly wrong with me.



So I take myself off to a traditional Chinese medicine practitioner and he says to me, "Well, stick out your tongue. Let me feel your pulse." These are all diagnosis tools that they use. He looks at me after the diagnosis, and he says, "Yeah, there's no yin in your body. There's virtually no yin in your body."

I'm like, "Okay."

He says, "No, it's actually quite a serious thing." He says, "You're like this fire, this ball of fire that's completely burning out and there's no substance to you. There's only just a ring of fire on the outside, but there's no substance on the inside, and you're burning out very soon."

He says, "No one is going to be able to measure that, but it's going to lead to a degenerative disease of some sort, and I don't know what it will lead to. So I don't know if it's going to be Parkinson's or Alzheimer's or some other degenerative disease," which, by the way, the minute he started saying that, at that point, he had my attention.

Then he looks at me and says to me, "It doesn't have to be that way."

I'm like, "Okay. Well, tell me what I need to do."

He says to me, "Well, we need to replenish the yin in your body. When I push down on your pulse, nothing comes back. There's no substance to you. We need to be able to replenish because there are two types of energies that need to integrate or correlate in a healthy body. One is a very deeper yin energy, which is a very soft and more-- an energy that holds you in place. Then there's the other one that's all



fiery, which is the yang, that allows you to go out and do stuff." He says, "You got lots of that. You're going out and doing stuff everywhere. You lack the energy to hold you in place. Your body is expressing this through these panic attacks."

So, he prescribed all kinds of things from herbs and supplements, to changing my diet, to changing the way I interact with all kinds of stimulation from digital and all the rest of it at the time.

But what he did that was really fascinating was he drew my attention to my behavior, and he said to me, "Can you start to shift your behavior around how you relate in meetings and interacting with other people? Can you slow things down? Can you soften more into what's here? Can you not be so reactive to jump to solve a problem? Can you allow the problem to be there and be with that?"

So that was the next piece where suddenly my body became relevant to the equation, where suddenly I had to listen more. So I would have told people at that time that worked for me, it really took off because I just became a better listener. I started to be able to achieve much more with about half as much effort. At that point, that was really great.

Then what happened was in the process of sitting on my couch, going through this existential crisis and reading these spiritual books, one of the pieces of information that came up for me was, "Hold on to your sense of being." That was something I read. "Connect with the depth of your sense of being." What does that mean, really, "Hold on to your sense of being?" I don't even know what my sense of being is. I'm trying to figure it out.



But I remember also having a therapist at the time. And the therapist was concluding through everything I've been sharing with her that I have this generalized anxiety that manifests as almost an anxiety of being. Almost just being is anxiety-provoking for me. And so I won't really have a relationship with being. So if I have to connect with my sense of being or hold onto it, I have no reference points for it.

So I just started to find a way to "What is my sense of being, what is my being?" And I started to connect with just the sensations in my body and my hands and my feet and what that's like to just sit with my attention in there, almost anchoring in the physicality of being and then seeing what effect that had on everything else I was doing.

So that became an actual practice that I started to utilize in conjunction with things like meditation and yoga that I was really into at the time.

**[00:24:28] Kathy:** Two things came to mind as you were speaking. One was I found the connection fascinating: the fact that you had this issue with vertigo and the thing that started to make most sense to you when you were sitting in Ireland was this idea of a whirlygig. There just seems to be something about spinning that is part of your story.

But the way you described burnout, that's the most insightful definition of burnout, of this imbalance of energy that I've never really heard before. And what I love so much about it is at that point it wasn't, "Well, you have to quit your job. You have to get off the treadmill." It's like, no, there are things you can do within your life to start



to bring balance. That doesn't happen overnight. There's this introduction. And the fact that it's working more on how might I be able to not be as reactive, how might I be able to bring a little slowness into my day? And that doesn't mean the back-to-back-to-back meetings go away. It means how you approach those meetings has to shift. So I really love that.

**[00:25:42] Jonathan:** One million percent. It's the foundation of how I offer insights or my perspective in the world, which is never at oddsness. It's how can we fit this extra piece into the world that you're operating rather than just blow the whole world apart and say, "Well, that's all rubbish." No, actually it's relevant. It's part of my life. It's, "Can I expand my life to include something else, to modulate?"

And that becomes a much different conversation because then we can just settle into things in a much easier fashion when we're not being forced to somehow toss half of ourselves away, to self-improve our way to a better place. Now, can we just be more expansive around us so that there's space for more of us rather than just only space for certain parts of us?

**[00:26:30] Kathy:** Yes, and it's interesting because what gets us into that predicament is we do push pieces of ourselves away. So we have been doing it, but we have been doing it in the service of fill-in-the-blank: family, marriage, work, all of the above. And this is a way of trying to slowly bring that back into balance.

I'm curious on what it is that you're bringing to the corporate world these days, and has that shifted from what was needed a few years ago to where we find ourselves in this very different world in 2022?





**[00:27:11] Jonathan:** Such a great question. The truth is my first gut response to a question like that, I don't really know. I think what I'm bringing into the corporate world is almost daring to bring into the corporate world, what I am daring to bring into my life, and then see what happens.

In other words, it's this idea that somehow in the corporate world we've had this idea, or at least I had this idea, that you have to sanitize yourself to get in. And then you have your thing called work-life balance, but the corporate world is your work and then your life balance is somewhere else. And apropos of what we were just talking about a moment ago, that's not a healthy integration.

So the question is, well, we don't want to say, well, the corporate world is bad. What we want to be able to do is say, "Can we bring something into the corporate world that can make it healthier or more optimal in a sense?"

More optimal would mean "Is it possible to maybe get more done with less?" That's what corporate is all about. Reduce your costs and increase your revenues. How could you do that? But the thing is, what I think most people don't realize is, a lot of the costs that are almost baked into a corporate environment are the costs of, let's say, the iceberg below the water.

They're baked in at a level where most people just accept them for what they are and can't really see them and everyone is trying to reduce costs based on the iceberg above the water. And so the opportunities are enormous in terms of what we could accomplish, but we'd have to somehow either lower the water level or



raise the iceberg for people to actually see what it is that needs attention in order to reduce costs. And these are things that are typically overlooked.

For example, if I had said, "Well, your sense of being is relevant to a healthy, functioning team at the executive level." What do you mean by that? The truth of the matter is that an executive team functions its best when it can be engaging in strategic thinking, where it can bring out the best in everyone to have healthy conversations around very challenging issues.

Typically, if you go to an organization, most executive teams do kinda well. Everyone's been trained to get stuff done. We know what we're going to accomplish by the end of the year and we're going to get it and we've got a budget and we can meet it. Nothing wrong with that. I should get it done.

But when you say to them, "Four years ago, you said that in three years time we'd like to have this done or you'd like to accomplish that. How are you doing on that?" You find often that most people aren't doing so great on the bigger stuff like that. They'll say, "Well, we can't get to it."

Typically what you often find is the process of getting there is quite uncomfortable because you're probably going to have to ask some uncomfortable questions. We're going to have to have some uncomfortable conversations. We're going to have to invite in aspects of reality that we are not quite comfortable inviting in. Let's just do business as usual the way we do and we're doing okay.



At that senior level, being able to be in a position to have a higher tolerance for those uncomfortable conversations, that's different than where we talk about, oh, we're going to raise the subject and then push through an agenda, which you could do, but that's not having the uncomfortable conversations.

Can we raise the subject and stay soft in the experience of hearing what other people have to say in a way that might mean that we're not going to get our decision quite right yet? So we may have to expand the conversation. We may have to bring other people in. We may have to really listen and understand what it is that's currently in the way or what we need to actually get addressed. Can we do that?

That starts to become biological because the things that allow us to not do that is really our sympathetic nervous system. Because of the generalized anxiety that I've had, I've had a much more magnified view of a dynamic that actually is in play everywhere, but just highly heightened in my case.

And so having practiced and worked through the process of being able to show up in the world in a particular softer, more open-hearted way, I can see how it may be a problem for a senior corporate team to have that experience because there's something getting in the way. You won't be aware of it because most of the time this operates below the surface of our awareness.

It's not everyone's going, "Well, I'm not anxious and I'm not stressed. You know what you're saying really can't have that much relevance for me."



Well what people don't realize is that we don't have to be feeling anything for our brains to be narrowing in perspective when a sympathetic nervous system is active. We may not be aware that this particular topic is uncomfortable for us and we are shutting down conversation or we're actually not fully expanded and seeing the possibilities because a sympathetic nervous system that's even mildly activated is going to narrow against any possible periphery information because it's trying to inherently save your life. That stuff's not relevant if it's active.

So then it becomes much more about helping people see the relevance of their own biology in the context of navigating very difficult conversations that involve complexity and high IQ.

**[00:33:15] Kathy:** Funny, as you were speaking, I'm putting myself through my own corporate career at different times, wondering at that point in time, how would I have received your information and how would the company and the corporation have received that information?

So, I started on Wall Street in the '80s and that was like, "You fit in." It was very cookie-cutter. What's interesting is that the tech boom opened Wall Street to a very different way of being because they needed to recruit talent at the time. So things that we would have never entertained before, there started to be a shift. From the way people dressed to how they built teams to the workplace to things that were okay and weren't okay -that expanded.

What you got to at the end, I'm thinking at the end of my corporate career, I would have had a more receptive corporate team to have these kinds of conversations.



But what really would be the driver, and I think you hit on it, it's that if you are looking for an expansive vision and strategy, these are the types of conversations we have to be willing to have.

Now I don't want to put words in your mouth, so I just want to give you some time to react to the way I'm hearing what you're saying.

**[00:34:35] Jonathan:** Yes, there's two ways to approach it. It's either at the level of the vision, which is very important. That's how I'm thinking corporate in the sense of--- We think strategy which is why people take a few days to be offsite somewhere else so that we can be out of the stress of the day-to-day so that we can expand our thinking and we can think strategy.

The challenge with that is day-to-day, we need to have that same kind of strategic bent on because we need to be contextualized by our strategy, otherwise, you can't really execute because you disconnect. That's why people have these offsite sessions. They feel great, and then a few weeks later, they're back into the swing of things and come back the year after, and then they're not connected to it anymore.

And so the question is how do you stay connected in the day-to-day so that you can stay with the overarching strategy and work in an awareness of the forces that are working against you to do that? And then there's at the engagement at the everyday level of every single person in any organization is going to be bumping up against the experience of: I don't necessarily fit, or these I feel like aren't with us, or this doesn't feel right, or there's something not quite right here.



They're going to rely on whatever their brain is telling them at that moment is the problem. Everyone's going to be fighting with each other around what they believe the problem to be. The reality is if they checked in and I said to them, "Well, why are you telling me all this about the issue they're facing? How do you feel in your body?" Most of the people the first time when I actually ask them "What does it feel like?" they'll say, "It feels like no one understands me."

Now let me tell you something. When I ask "What does it feel like?" I mean what does the sensation of it feel like? That's just another narrative that no one's really listening to you understand you, but what's actually the sensation? Where is it? Is it in your baby toe? Is it in your chest? Is it in your shoulder, in your back? Where are you feeling this experience that you're talking about?

And when they connect to it, they feel one of only a few different types of sensations. They're either agitated or they're constricted or they're tense. Those are the first three that's obvious. Another one, interestingly enough, is euphoria. Actually, people love euphoria. Unfortunately, it's also a byproduct of the sympathetic nervous system response. The final one that really people have, but it's the most challenging one to work with, is a dissociation or a disassociation.

They'll tell you they don't feel anything. They're good with it. It's no big deal. It's no problem. When the truth of the matter is everything that they're doing and showing you is that the actually is a problem, but they're not connected to it because they're so disassociated from the experience.



So these are all ways to bring people into an awareness of themselves relative to the issue so that they can start to get a grip on what's really going on with them so that they can then expand their own thinking and see possibilities that are relevant to them.

So that's where a lot of the coaching helps in terms of helping people find another gear or find a possibility.

**[00:37:46] Kathy:** Yeah, I love that. At the beginning, you said when people go offsite, there is that breath of relief, you're dressed more casually, well, at least back in the day, I don't know what it is now. But you're offsite, you're in a different place, there's just more relaxation. Then you come back and you're jumping into things and the deadlines are there and that thinking goes away.

So it's almost this idea of having offsite thinking while onsite, not losing that, which is incredibly valuable as well.

And this idea of where you feel it in your body. The first thing that came to mind, again, I'm reflecting back to my Wall Street days, was that constriction followed when burnout was to the point where it was almost time to leave. There is that disassociation. And that I think is just protection.

I think as we wrap up here, that's the listener that I really want to help with this last question because this idea of burnout is really prevalent for the folks who listen to this podcast. If somebody is recognizing themselves, either in your experience or in some of the things that you've talked about, and maybe they haven't really



explored it, but they can feel that disconnect between the internal and the external. What are some things, without overwhelming an already overwhelmed person, what are some things that might be helpful for them to start to explore some of these themes?

**[00:39:16] Jonathan:** I'd say that the most important one that most people don't want to do is to actually soften into the current experience that they're having. It's free. It's simple. It's not going to take up any time because I can still write the email, but can I soften into the experience while I'm doing it? I can still read what I need to read. I can still try and figure out the solution.

But can I notice something about my body? Can you change the relationship with the way you're doing things right now? Can I soften into it? So softening into it would mean to put your attention on your body in some way and allow it to relax a little more while you're doing this thing, whatever this thing is.

And what invariably people will notice is that they struggle to do that because either it's going to bring up an emotion that they don't really want to experience. Either it's sadness about the fact that I'm here, or it's resentment, I don't want to feel all those things. So if I soften, I'm going to feel it, so I'm going to harden, and then I'm burning out.

The truth is, what people don't necessarily understand, is that the sadness doesn't mean destitution on the other side of the sadness or that you're going to lose your job or that you're going to have to quit. It doesn't mean whatever your brain seems to think it's telling you it means. It just is a call for attention.





So whatever you're feeling is simply a call for you to come more into contact with it to allow it to be processed. There's a whole other conversation that we can talk about in terms of processing has nothing necessarily to do with thinking, even though there's neurological processing involved. It's not all the brain thinks. Only the frontal lobe thinks. The other parts of the brain actually process information, but not thinking.

And so we want to soften into the experience, and while we're doing whatever we're doing, can we experience it in a little bit more of a-- we're not so rookie, we're more gentle and open. And see what that reveals because we typically-- that's the breadcrumb that you need to take you in the direction of where you need to go. And it's normally the opposite.

What's funny, my nephew, many years ago, had a bar mitzvah. The night before his bar mitzvah, we were sitting around this table, and we were all doing it. I was invited to do it with him as part of, do we each have a bit of a life experience that we could share with him to offer him some advice? All the elders in the family, we're going to sit around and give him some advice.

His grandfather on my sister-in-law's side, said to him, "I've got some advice for you." The advice bottom line was the way the lions work when they hunt is that the older lions can't run and they can't do anything and they're really not that strong, but they can roar the loudest.

So what they do is they put the older lions in a position where they roar and then they put the younger lions in the complete opposite direction. Then when they



roar, all the animals run in the opposite direction and they run straight into the mouths of the lions who are ready to catch them.

His advice was, "When you hear the roaring, go in the direction of the roar, don't go in the opposite direction."

So in this case, it's like the breadcrumbs are actually in the direction of what it is we fear. So when we're softening into something, just to soften into whatever it is we're scared. Trust that it actually could be the right direction and see what's there. Why not?

**[00:42:57] Kathy:** Mmmmm. That is some big wisdom there, my friend. That is lovely.

I am sure our listeners would love to connect with you, so what's the best way for them to reach out?

**[00:43:10] Jonathan:** Well, you can just go to my website, [jonathanvarkul.com](http://jonathanvarkul.com), J-O-N-A-T-H-A-N-V-A-R-K-U-L.com. You can connect with me through there, no problem at all. My phone number, my details are all there to connect with.

**[00:43:27] Kathy:** Perfect. I will link that up in the show notes and it was really such a wonderful conversation. This is one of the ones when I go back and listen to again, I realize how much I missed as I'm trying to make sure that everything is recording here.



So I look forward to revisiting this myself. I'm sure our listeners will really appreciate it. Thank you so much, Jonathan. I really appreciate your time today.

**[00:43:49] Jonathan:** Awesome. You're welcome. Great to be here.

[music]

**[00:43:56] Kathy:** 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!

[music]

**[00:44:59] [END OF AUDIO]**