



**The Athena Wellness Podcast**  
**Episode 178 – Vancast: Why We Practice**  
**February 1, 2023**

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

Today's show is a Walking The Talk Vancast, a look behind the scenes into what I'm learning and working through along with a takeaway for you. These portable episodes are informal and casual, recorded on the go from wherever I happen to be at the time. And today I'm camped out in my writing room, a small space that has all of my journals and writing from the last 30 plus years with my van recording equipment set-up. And in a bit, you'll understand why I'm sitting here.

I'm happy to say the days are getting longer even though we still have about seven weeks of winter left in the northern hemisphere. I've got spring on my mind. And I have a plan to finally take the vancast on a cross-country road trip in May.



So this is a call for stories. If you or anyone you know has an inspiring story to tell and lives along the main east to west highways in the US, please send me a note at [hello@AthenaWellness.com](mailto:hello@AthenaWellness.com). I'd love to hear from you.

**[00:01:51]** Over the holidays, I read a story about a mother who told her daughter that she was leaving her all of her journals. But she couldn't read them until she was gone. The woman died a week later.

The daughter was surprised her mother even kept journals, let alone that there were three shelves of them. She reached for the first one and it was blank. The second one was empty, too. So was the third - and every journal that followed as she worked her way through those three shelves.

The rest of the book, which is titled *When Women Were Birds* by Terry Tempest Williams, is a reconciliation of this experience along with an exploration of what it means to have a voice, what suppresses it, and what's left in the wake of its void.

About halfway through, I closed the book and felt intense gratitude for the dozens, maybe hundreds - I've never counted, of notebooks that I've filled over the last 30 plus years in a way I never appreciated before. I've always had the impulse to write, but never paused to consider why.

And in that moment, I realized it didn't matter what happened to those notebooks. It was the act of writing, the process, the ritual of picking up a pen and expressing



my unique view, if only to myself. It has led me on a well-documented path of self-discovery and growth.

It has also deepened my empathy when I work with students and clients. I like to work with four practices, which I'll share briefly in a bit. And it's helpful for students to understand what it was like for me when I began each of those practices myself and where it has led over the years. And I love seeing how others take these practices and make them their own.

**[00:03:56]** So what are practices and why should we do them?

Practices are simply actions that we do for the purpose of learning, growing or experiencing. The practices I recommend have been specifically designed to discover and connect with your deepest self. This allows you to access your innate wisdom, or what I like to call the still point - a place of calm and knowing.

The more you know this inner voice, the better prepared you'll be as you travel your life path. When you practice consistently, this wise knowing can take you on a journey from head to heart, where you can live wholeheartedly as your truest self.

At its core, creating a practice is a method for developing new levels of self-awareness. If you're intentional with your practices, you'll find that they can be a wonderful support for your life choices. These practices are meant to be incorporated in your daily life, with the ability to be amended and scaled as you



develop and grow. And I highly encourage you to modify them in ways that best suit you.

**[00:05:12]** Here are the **four types of practices** I work with when I teach and coach. They are: **contemplation, journaling, positive action, and holding a question.** Let's take them one by one.

**Contemplation.** I intentionally use the word *contemplation* because it means deep reflective thought, which is a state of mind and spirit that's beneficial to nurture.

The range of activities to get you into a contemplative state is broad and ranges from silent meditation to reading to visualization to deep listening to being in nature to meaningful dialogue. There's a wonderful graphic that demonstrates this. It's from [contemplativemind.org](http://contemplativemind.org) and I'll link it up in the show notes.

I've worked with many of these contemplative practices over the years and I find the ones that support me change as my life shifts from one phase to the next. So I recommend that you find something that gets you to a quiet state and be consistent with it, if only for a few minutes a day.

**[00:06:26]** The next practice is **journaling.** And I readily admit that for some folks, the thought of writing stirs huge fears. But much like contemplation, you can find ways to make this supportive and part of your daily routine.



I believe that if you can write an email or send a text, you have the ability to journal. If you enjoy journaling, you can expand or amend your current practice. If you don't enjoy narrative writing, no worries, you can use a bulleted list. You can use your phone, maybe the Notes app or its audio, video or camera capabilities.

If you're more artistic, you can carve out a little time to doodle, sketch, paint or collage. If you prefer a portable or virtual option, you can also use an online journal, some of which have multimedia capabilities. Whatever method you choose, consider it a safe place for learning what wholehearted living means for you.

Consider your writing practice as a protected space, a private sanctuary, where you can identify where your inner and outer worlds are not congruent, where you can explore new areas of interest, and where you can dive deep in fearless conversations with yourself.

**[00:07:51]** The next practice is **positive action**. It's been my experience when I'm embarking on a new project or life phase, that the best way to gain a bit of momentum is to take a related positive action, a small intentional step toward a new way of being. I've also found that taking small actions and consistently reinforcing them with a positive outlook helps us connect with and learn to trust our inner wisdom.



**[00:08:21]** The last practice is **holding a question**. This practice has been my favorite since I left my corporate career and my identity began to shift *From Type A to Type Be*.

It gave me the opportunity to examine my beliefs, traits, characteristics, roles, and social connections, and decide if they're still the best choices for me as I move forward. Learning to hold a question facilitated this process and helped me determine what stayed in my life and what needed to change.

I think the reason why this is so powerful is because in our professional lives, we're always expected to know the answers as leaders and as team members. Holding a question gives us an opportunity to not know the answer and sit with it. This tends to open ourselves to possibilities that stretch beyond our logical mind into the realm of the heart, which invites innovation, connections and creativity.

There's also a power in the asking, in giving ourselves permission to not know and to work through it. It's a practice that keeps us present. These are big, open-ended questions that will invite you to be curious and go deep as you design your next steps.

Don't rush the answers and be open to the mystery when you receive an answer that you don't expect. When an unexpected answer surfaces for you, just jot it down in your notebook. It's usually an indication that you're not filtering as you



reflect, which is great. And you just may be heading down an exciting new trail of thought.

**[00:10:06]** As a takeaway for you, here are some thoughts to help you create your own practices around these four activities:

1. **Commit.** Determine when and where you'll practice. I suggest designating a place where you'll feel comfortable and creating a schedule that's sustainable. The magic is in the repetition and the honoring that comes from building the habit.
2. **Stay open.** Invite bewilderment and not knowing so you can spend time just being and living with your questions.
3. **Be kind to yourself.** That can take the form of suspending judgment on your efforts, which is especially important in the beginning, starting in small time increments, and then giving yourself space to experiment, or to allow yourself to just dream.
4. **Remember that you have options.** Work with the practices in whatever way makes sense for you. Make them your own by listening to your own inner guidance and amend them as you see fit.

**[00:11:15]** Above all, remember that the point of practice is to create an engaging conversation with your inner wisdom. I believe creating supporting practices will help you move toward what matters most, while taking good care of yourself along the way.



These practices will help you rely on your own insight and keep you on a path that's right for you. And these practices will help you stay well so you can do what lights you up with the people you love. That's wholehearted living.

And that's why we practice.

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**[00:11:55] 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.

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!

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**[00:12:57] [END OF AUDIO]**