



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 193 – Vancast: Mind Mapping – A Tool for Transformation
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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 recording on my back deck, enjoying a cool but sunny spring day.

In the last vancast, we talked about how to discover and explore a broad range of interests in both work and play. And I shared a story of a woman who re-engaged with her adolescent love of figure skating when she turned 40 years old. And then I



gave you a simple way to begin to explore the people, places, things and activities that bring you a sense of joy.

What I love about the story of the midlife skater is she bought a pair of skates and got out on the ice three times a week. She just did it. And she allowed the elation of her time on the ice to spill over into other areas of her life.

What I'd like to talk about in this episode is what it feels like to walk your path as it begins to diverge from your norm. Using the skater as an example, she was exploring a long hidden aspect of herself, under the cover of early morning darkness and a skating rink without other adults. Yet it was shaping her in unseen ways.

I've felt this myself. I think back to the times when I was training for an ultra marathon, or writing my book, or planning for my retirement, it felt like I was living double lives. In each case, I was more than the corporate executive who showed up for work each day. I was an athlete, an author, and an entrepreneur at various times throughout those last five years of my career.

[00:02:49] Today, I'd like to help you go deeper in exploring a life path that may be branching off a bit, especially if you're at the point where you feel like you're bridging two different worlds - the one of daily responsibilities and the one where you're connecting with a sense of aliveness that has been dormant. How do you begin to move toward what you're finding compelling, even if it feels elusive at the moment?



A great way to explore these abstract ideas is through a process called Mind Mapping. Mind Mapping is a visual thinking tool that can help you brainstorm and organize your thoughts and ideas. In the business world, Mind Mapping is used to generate ideas, solve problems, and plan projects in a creative or collaborative way. But it can be an especially helpful tool to use when you're working through a life transition.

I'll walk you through the basic steps of creating a Mind Map and then apply those steps to an example of navigating a life change. First the steps:

1. To create a Mind Map, start by writing down the main topic in the center of a piece of paper.
2. Then branch out from the center with related ideas and thoughts. You can keep it simple by including words only or you can use different colors, shapes and images. Adding these other elements will not only make your Mind Map more visually appealing, but new connections may be easier to identify.
3. As you brainstorm, don't worry about the output. Just let your thoughts flow freely. You can always go back and amend your Mind Map later.
4. Once you have a basic Mind Map, start to think about how the different ideas are related to each other. What are the pros and cons of each option? What are the risks and rewards? And what are your intentions and potential actions?



5. As a deeper understanding of your options emerge, you can then start to shape a plan. What initial steps can you take to move forward? What resources would be helpful? And what support do you need?

[00:05:24] Now an example. Let's take Mary, a woman who has established a long professional career and is considering what to do next. Mary has already excluded the option of retirement. She wants to find a passion and pursue a more purposeful life.

1. In the center of the page, Mary writes the words "What's next," and circles them.
2. Envisioning what life might be like when she doesn't have her current work commitments, she draws several lines with potential ways she might want to spend her time and circles each. For example: *de-stress from work, travel for pleasure, start a business, write a book, get involved in the local community.*
3. Mary continues down each of these five paths, jotting down words and thoughts on why it's important and what it could feel and look like. For example, the things that came to mind when she thought about the word *de-stress* included phrases like *outdoor movement, sleep, deepened friendships, ocean, calm energy, laughter, and mountains.*
4. Once the basic Mind Map was completed, Mary looked for prominent themes. For example, on the *de-stress* thread, she combined *deepen friendships* with *laughter, mountains* and *outdoor movement*, because as a result of this exercise, she already decided to invite a few friends on a



day-long hiking trip. She also connected *ocean, calm energy, and travel* with the intention of booking a trip to a favorite beach that she hadn't visited in years.

5. Starting with those two activities, hiking and a beach trip, she created a concrete action plan for each and began taking action immediately.

That's a simplified version of what a Mind Mapping exercise could look like.

[00:07:38] And now to you. How might you use Mind Mapping as you navigate a life change as a way to begin to initiate action?

My first suggestion is to pull the lens out by first asking some big questions about the topic that's the subject of your Mind Map. For example, if the life change you're considering is similar to Mary's, you might start with questions such as:

- What kind of lifestyle do I want to have? Or
- What kind of impact do I want to make in the world? Or
- How would I like to feel each day once work is no longer part of my daily schedule?

As you warm up your brainstorming muscles, you can expand your range of possibilities by asking additional questions like:

- If I can only do one thing for the rest of my life, what would it be? And
- What would I attempt if I had no fear? And
- How would I spend my days if I had all the money in the world?



If you're feeling really creative, you can ask sensory based questions to get to deeper emotions and meaning. For example, you could ask:

- What color is the next phase of my life? Or
- If the next phase of my life had a soundtrack, what would the songs be?
- You can also create a next life phase culinary menu, a travel itinerary, or a list of beloved memories and related feelings you'd like to evoke once more.

As you begin to Mind Map, keep the following in mind:

- Be open to new ideas, surprises and connections.
- Allow the thoughts to flow without judgment or constraint of perfection or life responsibilities.
- Feel free to use colors, shapes and images if you find them visually stimulating or you find them more freeing.

[00:09:45] Once you come to a stopping point, tuck it away for a bit. When you feel it's the right time, take a look and see what deeper messages and meaning you can glean from your work. If it feels right, share it with a trusted friend to see what they pick up that perhaps wasn't apparent to you.

When you have a version of the Mind Map that you're happy with, now it's time to take action. Pick one area that has the most energy for you. If the next step is clear, create a plan to take action. If the way forward isn't clear but you're intrigued by a particular section, you can create a Mind Map on that specific area and see where it leads.



However you get there, I hope this technique is helpful. You're in a wonderful place of experimentation. You're learning how to articulate the beginnings of a new life phase to others and how to embody it for yourself. Over time, you'll get more adept at striking a balance between fully showing up in a new manner and remaining open to the process. As you get used to this call and response type of relationship, you'll feel more in flow with life and all that can and will be expressed through you.

Your job is simple. As tennis legend Arthur Ashe once said, "Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can." With this as your mantra, you can take steps along a diverging path and walk toward a new vision as it crystallizes.

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[00:11:31] 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.

Until next time, be well!



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[00:12:34] [END OF AUDIO]