



**The Athena Wellness Podcast**  
**Episode 200 – The Medicinal Power of the Open Road**  
**May 17, 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 and welcome friends. 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 in my van close to home after an incredible journey across the United States, which I'll share more about in a minute.

**[00:01:09]** But first, I wanted to take a moment to share that this is the 200th episode of *The Athena Wellness Podcast*. I usually speed right by such



achievements with my eyes focused on the next one. But I felt it was important to pause here for a moment. So I did a little research and here's what I found.

In 2023, there are over 5 million podcasts. That sounds like a lot but of the 5 million only 450,000 have released a new episode in the past 90 days. And do you know how many of those release on a weekly basis like *The Athena Wellness Podcast*? As of May 2023, 156,000 podcasts drop a new episode each week.

And one more stat that was a little harder to find. But according to Libsyn, which is a podcast hosting platform, it's estimated that there are only 45,000 podcasts that have released 200 episodes. And this podcast would have never been one of the 45,000 if it weren't for you.

I know there are infinite places where you can focus your attention. And I don't take your decision to spend some of your valuable time with me. So thank you for being a listener. I look forward to deepening these conversations and continuing to provide value and service to you for the foreseeable future.

**[00:02:43]** And now on to today's topic. As I mentioned, I just returned from what I'll call an intentional road trip. Intentional because it was mindfully designed – or more accurately “undesigned” – to be counter to my usual thought process and safety nets.

While I've taken a number of cross country trips in the past, this was the first time I decided to go solo. I also gave little thought to logistics upfront other than solidifying some meeting dates mid-trip. And lastly, I felt that the drive out to the



West Coast would be quiet and reflective. And with that minimal framework and my portable podcasting gear I set out.

**[00:03:29]** What I'd like to share with you today are the transformational qualities of such an adventure and how you might plan one for yourself, even if it's only for one day. We'll start with a little background, talk about the benefits and challenges of such a trip, how to prepare for your own adventure, how to invite the transformational elements to your road trip, and then a few takeaways from my experience.

First a little background. I was able to trace the term *road trip* to the early 1900s through a *New York Times* article describing transcontinental touring by motorcar. Long distance automobile trips continued to grow in popularity until they became an American pastime by the 1950s when the Interstate Highway System was being developed.

But there are also popular international road trips such as the European Highway or the E-Road, the Garden Route of South Africa, and the longest road trip in the world, the Pan American Highway that clocks in at 19,000 miles stretching from Alaska to Argentina.

So why even consider taking a road trip? From a pure leisure perspective, road tripping provides flexibility and freedom to explore where you want when you want, taking your time to enjoy the sights and making unplanned stops off the beaten path to learn about new places and make new friends.



This type of trip is wonderful to deepen relationships with your travel partners if you're with family and friends, or with yourself if you're traveling solo. And then there's the way a road trip helps us shift our daily routine to what's essential. It's a beautiful opportunity to appreciate the simplest things in life.

There are also wellness benefits, including the mental boost of seeing new places and meeting new people; the opportunity for physical movement when exploring new surroundings; deep sleep as a result of the activity and fresh air; and stress reduction from being on your own schedule.

Of course there are also challenges, such as driving fatigue, the possibility of severe weather, traffic delays or detours, and car trouble. But it's been my experience that the benefits far outweigh the challenges. In fact, since my first cross-country trip in the mid-1990s, I can count the challenges in all of my trips on one hand.

**[00:06:18]** If all of this road tripping talk is piquing your interest, here are a few things to keep in mind as you plan your adventure:

1. **Choose a destination you find compelling and engaging.** Take the time to plan a potential route before you leave so you can plan your driving time accordingly and include breaks every few hours along with time to wander and explore.
2. **Pack light.** The less stuff you have, the easier it is to be nimble while traveling.



3. **Take a cooler.** Bringing healthy snacks will go a long way to keeping you energized while you're behind the wheel. My favorites are apples, bananas, nuts, granola, water and iced tea. I also know my coffee options so I can stop along the way.
4. **Bring entertainment.** For me, that's my journal, a book, my music playlists, a few downloaded podcasts and audiobooks.
5. **Get your car checked before you go.** Make sure your vehicle is ready for the trip and your roadside assistance game plan is in place. You may also want to take a first aid kit, a flashlight and some extra cash for emergencies.

**[00:07:39]** With all of this as a backdrop, let's get to some of the medicinal power of the open road. I took my first road trip while working on Wall Street. The allure was simple: freedom, adventure, exploration. At that point in my career, I had traveled internationally and to major US cities, but I had never experienced the American landscape.

I grew up just outside of New York City in the smallest, most densely populated county in New Jersey. So the idea of seeing a western highway melt into the horizon's vanishing point under a vast sky was as foreign to me as some of the countries I had the privilege to visit.

And here's why I keep returning to epic road trips: the rhythm of the road. This rhythm can be found in the feeling of pointing West and driving for 3000 miles. That never gets old for me. It can also be found in being present and opening to the journey. It's in the sound of the engine and the tires rotating on the road. It's in



the changing light as the earth revolves around the sun. It's in the passing scenery, like road movies, as you drive by towns, farms, fields, deserts, plains and mountains. It's in the memories you make and the people you meet. And it's in the feeling of possibility and the spirit of adventure.

It's the rhythm of the road that invites transformation. And that's because all the elements of reflection are wrapped up in taking a long drive. That includes being in a quiet place without interruption, having a relaxed and clear mind that can ponder, having an open heart that can process thoughts and feelings while welcoming new experiences.

**[00:09:49]** And all of this sets the stage for some deep contemplation. It's in this open and relaxed state that transformation naturally occurs. And the mystery of this transformation is that it doesn't happen on demand. It's more mysterious or mystical.

Here are some examples of what has spurred transformation for me over the years as I left my daily routine behind and got on the road:

1. Stepping out of my comfort zone;
2. Expanding my horizons and learning new things;
3. Being surrounded by stunning natural beauty; and
4. Gaining a new perspective by slowing down, being present, and listening.



This has led to a deeper human experience by connecting with family and friends, as well as a deeper spiritual experience by connecting with myself and all that is beyond.

**[00:11:00]** At the end of road trips I've taken in the past, it wasn't unusual for me to return with three things. The first was a better understanding of myself, due to time reflecting on my thoughts, feelings, experiences, and aspirations. The second was a sense of lightness, due to letting go of what no longer served me. And the third was a detailed plan to create the future that I envisioned for myself during the trip.

This time, my traveling intention was different and as a result, the takeaways were atypical for me. Part of my intention was the desire to put all of the things that I recommend in my blogs and podcasts into practice. I've shared the quote about living "in perpetual creative response to whatever is present." Sixteen days of solo cross-country travel gives you an opportunity to live that principle.

And I experienced some of what I've already described, that is, a better understanding of myself and a sense of lightness due to letting go of what no longer serves. There was also a deep sense of appreciation for the life that I've built and those I love.

But here's what was different. At the end of this trip, there was no detailed plan, no blueprint, no next steps to bring a new vision to life. This was more about clearing and holding empty space to allow what's new to come forward naturally. My big takeaway was less about *doing* and more about *being*.



It's going to take some time to unpack that last statement, to integrate that learning. And I guess the best way I can describe it is that there are still podcasts to create, articles to write, coaching and teaching to do, there are relationships to nurture and life to live. The undoing part of this is expanding and tending the space needed to bring those things forth with more depth.

**[00:13:26]** I think that's a good place to bring this to a close. If you find anything I've shared compelling, I hope you'll consider exploring the medicinal power of the open road. And should you find yourself thinking about planning your own road trip, drop me a line at [kathy@athenawellness.com](mailto:kathy@athenawellness.com). I'd be happy to connect with you.

I'll leave you with a lyric from the song Moab written by Conor Oberst and I'll put a link to the song in the show notes so you can check it out.

*"There is nothing that the road cannot heal.  
There is nothing that the road cannot heal.  
Washed under the blacktop, gone beneath my wheels,  
There is nothing that the road cannot heal."*

[music]

**[00:14:15] 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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**[00:15:18] [END OF AUDIO]**