



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 223 – The Power of a Reverse Bucket List
September 27, 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, as the remnants of Tropical Storm Ophelia pass over the Northeastern US, I'm recording this at home.



[00:01:07] Some of my biggest lessons have come from spending time with loved ones who are at the end of life. Each time the experience was different, as unique as the person who was transitioning.

Many who have had the honor to bear witness at such times come away with a different vantage point about their own lives. Some have a better understanding of love and forgiveness. For others, the impermanence of life is impactful. And still others, it's about leaving this plane with no regrets.

In the wake of such an experience, some take the proverbial bucket list approach to life. A bucket list is an itemized inventory of experiences or achievements that a person hopes to have or accomplish during their lifetime. It focuses on what hasn't yet been achieved and can be used to keep track of things that we want to do when there's more time or resources.

Of course, what can happen is that the perfect time never arrives or a person can run out of vitality before getting to the items on the list. And even when the items are methodically checked off, satisfaction can be brief, lasting until another item on the list becomes the focus. This is what gives bucket lists a quality of "I'll be happy when..."

[00:02:36] Enter the reverse bucket list, which can act like a roadmap for a life filled with lasting satisfaction and meaning. A reverse bucket list, as the name implies, focuses us on things that we already experienced and accomplished, both big and small. It acts like a highlight reel of feel-good memories and purposeful moments.



Here are four of the numerous benefits of creating a reverse bucket list:

1. **It inspires gratefulness and a sense of accomplishment.** In the busyness of life, it can be easy to get caught up in the daily grind. This exercise is a lovely way to celebrate your successes and reflect on all the good that has already come your way, which can be a great boost to your self-esteem and motivation.
2. **It can help you identify what matters most.** When we reflect on what makes us feel good in our lives, it's easier to eliminate the noise and the clutter, removing the less meaningful things in your life with ease.
3. **It can help you focus on the positive.** It can be easy to lapse into a negative mindset that emphasizes what's gone wrong or what needs to be done. This exercise can help you mindfully accentuate an optimistic attitude, which can increase your well-being.
4. **It can help you develop clarity on your future.** Once you've reflected on all of your accomplishments, you can start to think about what you want to achieve in the future. This exercise is a great starting point for connecting with your deepest desires and setting intentions to spend your time in a way that brings you closer to that future vision.

[00:04:33] And now your takeaway. If you're intrigued enough to give this a try, you will be happy to know that creating a reverse bucket list is easy. Here are four steps to get you started:



1. **Set aside some reflection time.** It took me approximately 15 minutes to come up with an initial list of about 50 items.
2. **Create a list of meaningful moments.** These items can be anything from big life milestones to small, everyday accomplishments.
3. **Group these moments into categories.** You might use chronological decades or life categories. I'll share more about that in a moment.
4. **Reflect on your meaningful moments list.** How do you feel when you take it all in? What stands out the most? Are there themes or gaps? What didn't make the list that surprised you? What did you learn? How did you grow as a result?

Before I share my experience with creating a reverse bucket list, here are some examples of what you can include on your list:

- **Personal accomplishments**, such as graduation, marriage, having children, buying a house, changing an unhealthy habit, writing a book, an artistic or athletic feat, a spiritual quest, or travel experiences.
- **Professional accomplishments**, such as landing a new job, getting promoted, giving a presentation, winning an accolade, publishing a paper, or starting a business.
- **Relationship accomplishments**, such as investing quality time to build strong relationships with loved ones, expanding your circle of friends, forgiving past hurts, being of service, and spending time on a meaningful cause.



- **Personal growth accomplishments**, such as learning a new skill, committing to a new wellness practice, overcoming a challenge or fear, developing self-compassion, or trying something new to expand your own horizons.

[00:06:55] As I mentioned, it took me about 15 minutes to come up with my initial list. It was enough time for a good start, but it's by no means a representative list. That said, what surprised me wasn't what was on the list. The value for me was the time reflecting on what stood out the most.

Turns out it wasn't about the shiny moments. I did feel a sense of accomplishment, pride and gratitude for what I achieved and the experiences I'm fortunate enough to have so far in my life. But what held the most meaning was the process that got me to those pinnacle moments.

Here are a few examples:

- It wasn't about the career trajectory that I enjoyed for more than three decades. It was about those who helped me along the way and who I was able to help in return.
- It wasn't holding the first book I published in my hands. It was the memory of writing it at 4am and feeling like I was living a writer's life before heading off to my day job.
- It wasn't crossing the finish line of a 50K race, the farthest that I had run in my then 54 years. It was about the months of training and discipline and all I learned about myself along the way.



- And finally, it wasn't the picture perfect Polaroids from all the years of travel throughout my career. It was about a kid from New Jersey with modest means who never traveled before getting a job that required a passport and how that expanded my awareness and forever altered my perception of the world for the better.

If I had to summarize my experience, it's about the true intrinsic gifts in life that engaged and energized me, the everyday moments of connection, intimacy, beauty and growth.

And that's some return on investment for a 15 minute exercise. So much so that I intend to continue adding and refining my list with a focus on what's brought me true happiness, what I've enjoyed, what I've found meaningful, what has created positive emotions, and what's added to my well-being and quality of life. Then I'll use that output to mindfully continue to foster that contentment and growth.

[00:09:28] As we conclude today, I hope you'll give the reverse bucket list exercise a try. Beyond the sense of accomplishment and the focus on the positive, this exercise can give you valuable insight and perspective on how you're using your most precious resource - your time.

It's a beautiful practice to inspire gratitude for your life journey with all of its twists and turns. And it's a practice that will help you better understand what brought you to this point in your life and empower you to mindfully create your future, so when your time comes to leave this earth, you'll do so with no regrets.



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[00:10:13] 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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[00:11:15] [END OF AUDIO]