



**The Athena Wellness Podcast**  
**Episode 243 – Unlock Your Next Life Chapter, Part III – Your Hero’s Journey**  
**January 31, 2024**

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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 as you create your next chapter, turning life transitions into transformation.

**[00:00:33] Kathy:** Hello and welcome friends. Thanks so much for joining me for the shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

As I mentioned last episode, If I could sum up the biggest lesson I've learned since leaving my longtime corporate career behind, it's this: The skills that make you successful in one chapter of your life are rarely the ones you rely on as you create the next chapter of your life.

That lesson has inspired this series of podcasts focused on sharing some tools that you can add to your toolkit to unlock your next chapter and navigate the unfamiliar territory ahead.



So far, we've talked about using discontent as a springboard to move us forward. And then we explored elements of your origin story and how it has led you to your current life stage. Today, you'll learn about a common story format called the hero's journey that you can utilize to unlock your next chapter.

I find this technique to be very powerful for clients and students because when you think about your experiences within the framework of the hero's journey, you can visualize your life in a new way, with a focus on learning and growth.

Reframing your life in this manner will help you discover everyday life adventures and help you feel your way forward. And the good news: no writing is required.

**[00:02:11]** Let's begin our session today with a basic question. What is a hero's journey?

In the simplest terms, it's a story template, a familiar format that's been used to create countless stories you love. The format is always the same. The main character, or hero, leaves her familiar world behind to go on an adventure, learns to navigate an unfamiliar world by facing challenges and learning a lesson, and then returns home transformed.

Here's what we'll be working with for the remainder of this episode. First, I'll walk you through the elements of the hero's journey so you can begin applying it to your own story as you listen. Then I'll give you a simple example to demonstrate it. And we'll wrap up by preparing for the next episode where we'll put into practice all that we've learned.



**[00:03:11]** We'll start with the hero's journey framework. Of course, we need a hero, and that's you. Then we need a journey. And there are three stages of the journey: the departure, the initiation and the return. Let's take them one by one:

- 1. Departure:** You're in a place where you're living your life. You have a daily routine, family, friends, a career. And then there's a disruption. Something interrupts your life flow. Maybe you have to make a tough decision or handle an unexpected event. Perhaps it's a new goal or an intention that feels too big for you, but you find intriguing. There's usually a period of doubt or hesitation because the pull of your current life is strong. It's comfortable and it wants to keep you there. But at some point, a wise teacher will cross your path. The teacher can take many forms, such as a mentor, an elder or even a book. Someone or something will provide guidance and the tools you need for the journey.
- 2. Initiation:** This is where you enter the unknown. You've agreed to cross the threshold from your ordinary life to a path of uncertainty, one that's pulling you forward. Along the way you will be challenged. You may be tested, confronted or deterred, but there will also be allies along the way that you will rely on for support, along with your wise mentor. And you will need the support because the heart of the journey is when you confront yourself by facing your fears, or overcoming what feels like an insurmountable obstacle. But you persist, rise to the challenge, succeed, and then celebrate.



- 3. The Return:** Your adventure may have concluded, but you're a changed person as your journey continues in your day to day life. You've integrated your learnings and you're stronger for the experience. And you find ways to share what you've gained with those in your world.

While blockbuster Hollywood movies and bestselling books use this format – think Star Wars and Harry Potter – it also happens in our lives all the time. Think of the journeys you've taken when you've had major life changes, such as graduating from school, getting married, having a child, getting promoted or changing careers – all hero's journeys.

**[00:06:04]** I'll give you a simple example of how you can experience a hero's journey while being firmly entrenched in your everyday life. Toward the end of my corporate career, I felt a pull to explore ultra-endurance sports. It started with a multi-day cycling event that covered more than 100 miles a day, which took me about 15 months of training beforehand. The following year, I set my sights to run an ultramarathon, involving a five month training plan to get ready.

Let's put this scenario through the hero's journey stages:

- 1. Departure:** I'm in my mid-50s and in a good place. I worked hard to get to the point in my life that I'm enjoying. And yet I feel this pull to explore these athletic pursuits that make no sense. I hadn't been on a bike in 20 years. And I had never run more than 17 miles, and that run happened in my 40s when I got lost on a trail. So I wrestled with periods of doubt. Why would I want to interrupt my perfectly happy life to commit to these events? But



then the wise teachers appeared. It was a work colleague for the cycling challenge and a book that inspired the ultramarathon.

- 2. Initiation:** I entered the unknown when I committed to each event. Because once I say “Yes,” I’m all in, and I’ll find a way to complete what I commit to do. In doing so, I agreed to cross the threshold into these new experiences. And I was challenged and tested at every turn. For the cycling event, it was more mental. This meant getting back on a bike. So much had changed. It meant getting used to a new bike and training so I could ride for miles and miles at a time. It meant learning to “clip in,” where my cycling shoes were actually connected to my bike – a thought that scares me to this day. And yes, I did fall as I learned. The challenges for running were more physical and involved not only putting in the miles, but learning how to fuel my body during long runs and care for my muscles, ligaments and joints. And yes, I did face my cycling fears and what seemed like insurmountable obstacles in running for 50 kilometers. In the end, I got to celebrate seven 100+ mile days on the bike, a marathon distance training run, and a completed 50k ultramarathon.
- 3. The Return:** Did these experiences change me? You bet they did. I came out of those events feeling stronger mentally, emotionally and physically. I learned how to develop a comprehensive plan, adjust as I gained more knowledge, and see it through to the end. And it gave me perspective that I could apply to other situations in my personal and professional life. When faced with a new challenge, I could compare it to a new level of what was



possible for me. A few years later when I considered leaving corporate life behind. I had newfound confidence because I had recent evidence of what I could do when I set my mind to it. Lastly, shifting my focus to the wellness industry, I could find ways to share what I learned, which I did with my first book, [\*The Athena Principles\*](#).

I share this specific example so you can see that although sometimes profound life changes are necessary as a catalyst for the journey, you can also experience it, as I have, as a complement to your current life.

At the time of the hero's journeys I outlined, I was working full time and traveling as part of my job, while attending to personal responsibilities of family and friends. There was no need to leave everything behind to climb the distant mountain. In a way, I brought the mountain to me.

**[00:10:45]** Now that you know a little about the hero's journey, you may be asking yourself, "Why? Why would someone who is happy and comfortable in their life put themselves through this?"

Here's how it went down for me. I don't know what sparked my interest. There were tens of thousands of employees at my firm, yet only 162 signed up for the bike challenge. And a small percentage of them trained and finished the event.

Same thing for the ultra. Thousands of people probably read the same memoir I did. Yet as I read it, something deep inside came alive and I became curious. "Could I do that? What would that feel like? How would I go about it?" Those were the questions that tumbled in my brain and would not leave me alone.



So in full transparency, I don't know what it is that calls to us. The calling is a mystery. And I can only tell you that it happens. But here's what fascinates me - What makes us choose to answer a call?

I can tell you why I answered the calls I told you about. It has to do with the challenge element of the journey. In literary terms, it's called The Ordeal. It's the part of the journey where the hero realizes she must become someone different to meet the challenge. It's the point of growth.

When I accepted my calls, I wasn't aware of this. But here's the question that I carried throughout: "Who will I be on the other side of this?"

It was the curiosity of the impact these experiences would have on me that fueled me throughout grueling training sessions. And it's what fuels me to this day when I face a new challenge, like deciding it was time to leave my corporate life behind and start my own entrepreneurial adventure. That's my current hero's journey. And it still engages and motivates me each day.

**[00:13:07]** And now your takeaway. Let's get practical and talk about how you can use what we've covered so far in this series to explore your hero's journey.

Here's what you've done to date. In the first episode, you thought about seeds of discontentment and glimmers of contentment. I had you make those lists because the hero's journey can sometimes begin when discomfort becomes unmanageable and change is needed. Or you've had a taste of contentment and want more.



Both can be journey motivators. But you may be in the doubt or hesitation aspect of the departure phase. So it's good to explore those lists and see if you can identify a starting point for your hero's journey.

In the last episode, you looked at motivating factors in your backstory. I gave you some reflection questions along with a suggestion to look at people that you find inspiring and why. This is fertile ground to explore and uncover what may be calling to you.

**[00:14:22]** So that's my recommendation this week. Take a look at what you've done to this point in the series and identify a call to action that intrigues you. It can be something small, like starting a writing practice or running a local 5k race. Or it could be something much bigger, like tackling a lifelong dream. Choose what's calling to you and we'll be back next week to put it into action.

Until then, I hope you enjoy working with these questions and exercises. These sparks are leading you to unlocking your next chapter.

If you're interested in exploring the themes we covered today and would like a guide for this soulful journey, please do reach out. My coaching services are listed on my website and you're always welcome to reach out via email. I'll link all of that up in the show notes. And as always, I'd love to connect with you.

I appreciate you and I look forward to seeing you for Part IV next week.

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**[00:15:31] 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](http://www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast).

Until next time, be well!

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**[00:16:33] [END OF AUDIO]**