



## **The Athena Wellness Podcast**

### **Episode 253 – Coaching Convos: Heart-Led Living, Part V – Design Your Practice**

**April 10, 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.

Before we get started, I wanted to mention that I have a new free resource. It's a short guide titled *Five Questions to Explore a Soulful Second Chapter*. It's perfect if you're thinking of leaving your professional career and you're wondering what to do next. You can download it at [athenawellness.com/reimagine](https://www.athenawellness.com/reimagine). And I'll also put a link in the show notes so you can check it out.

**[00:01:03] Kathy:** Hello and welcome friends. Thanks so much for joining me.

Let's continue our Midlife Coaching Conversation series inspired by a student who asks, "You always talk about living from the heart. What does that mean? And how do I do it?"



Last week we explored the benefits of connecting with your inner knowing and a wide range of options for doing so using the Tree of Contemplative Practices model. The episode concluded with trying one of the practices on a daily basis to cultivate a deeper connection with yourself.

Today we'll talk about how to design a stillness practice that's tailored to your needs and life. We'll explore considerations for those establishing a practice, as well as ways to go deeper for those who already have a practice.

The intention is to integrate time for you to connect with your inner guidance in a way that's seamless and pleasant, a practice you look forward to each day. Specifically, we'll explore how to assess your needs, choose an engaging activity, design your practice, create a routine and ensure the practice grows with you.

**[00:02:19]** Let's start with a self assessment.

As you know, I'm a big fan of starting any endeavor with intention. That is, what's your "Why" for wanting to start any life activity.

The overall purpose is to create a bit of space to connect with your intuition. But why are you compelled to do so? Are you looking for more focus, depth or creativity? Perhaps you want to cultivate more peace, ease or compassion. What reason is resonating with you?

I'll give you an example. When I was contemplating my next chapter a number of years back, I often used my morning commute as quiet time to let my mind



wander. I'd sometimes drive in silence. Other times I listened to something inspirational that would spark ideas and feelings.

I began to look forward to those quiet morning drives. It was a safe space to use my intuition to dream of what life could feel like. I made lists of what I wanted to keep and what needed to change, often capturing voice notes as inspiration struck. It was the beginning of a blueprint of the life I lead today.

**[00:03:42]** Here are three things for you to consider as you assess your needs.

1. **Circumstance.** How do you relate with your intuition today? Do you ignore your gut feelings? Are you unsure how to work with your intuition? Perhaps you have a strong connection that you want to develop further.
2. **Preference.** What's your learning style? What type of activities work best for you? Do you like quiet indoor practices like journaling or guided meditations? Perhaps you easily connect with your inner guidance on nature walks.
3. **Availability.** What timeframes can you commit to on a regular basis? Since consistency is key, what's a realistic target? Start small. When I began my practice, it was five minutes each morning when I woke.

Now that you have a good understanding of your needs, preferences and timing, let's talk specifics for those just getting started, and then those with established practices.



As a reminder, we're using a model called the Tree of Contemplative Practices, which outlines a broad range of activities that can be used to cultivate mindfulness, expand self awareness, and connect with your inner wisdom.

In the image, the tree is grounded in the earth, with one main root labeled Communication and Connection and the other root labeled Awareness. Each tree branch focuses on a different aspect of inner exploration and personal growth, including Stillness, Generative, Creative, Activist, Relational, Movement, and Ritual.

In the last episode, we explored each branch in detail, including its purpose, how it might benefit you, and the related practices. Today, I'd like to show you how to put it into practice.

**[00:05:53]** If you're just getting started, the Contemplative Practices Tree can serve as a roadmap for your inner discovery. And the best way to get started is with a simple mindfulness exercise for no more than 5 to 10 minutes a day. The purpose is to encourage inner focus and stillness. This is the space you want to get to know. It's the source of your inner wisdom.

Select a practice that works for you. As long as you have a period of uninterrupted quiet, you can get creative with the activity. Examples include guided meditations, focusing on the breath, scanning the body for emotions and sensations, journaling, visualizing repeating a word or mantra, yoga, and mindful activities such as walking in nature, or gardening.



The keys to a regular practice are to start small, be kind to yourself, and enjoy the quiet. That's all. Let it be your pressure-free and judgment-free zone. The consistency is what attuned you to your inner knowing and cultivates your intuition over time. It's been my experience that when you approach your practice in this manner, you'll gradually expand to other types of practices that naturally call to you.

**[00:07:20]** If you're familiar with contemplative practices but want to go deeper or re-energize your practice, here are some recommendations:

1. **Reflect.** Take some time and think about your current practice. What's been working well? What would you like to change? Which branches of the Contemplative Practices Tree have you favored most?
2. **Deepen.** For the practice you most enjoy, what are the ways to intensify or expand it? For example, if you use a meditation app, you can try one day a week to just sit in silence. Or you can choose to read a short inspirational passage before meditating. You can take the practice outside, connect with your senses, or journal after your practice. These are all paths that can heighten your experience.
3. **Explore.** If your practice is feeling flat or uninspiring, try a different branch of the tree. What will bring fresh energy? Ritual? Movement? Creativity? Try something new or combine a new activity with your current practice. That can shift your perspective and energize it. Just experiment and have fun.

**[00:08:47]** Now it's time to design your practice and create a routine to incorporate it in your daily life.



Bring the practice you'd like to try or deepen into mind and answer these five questions:

1. What is the practice?
2. What time of day will I practice?
3. For how long?
4. What can I do to make it habitual?
5. What would make it more enjoyable?

I have a daily practice of quiet connection. I do it first thing in the morning for 10 minutes. I have a special notebook and a pen near my bed and a timer on the face of my watch that I can easily set. To make it more enjoyable, I may take the practice outside, incorporate a little breathing to center myself, connect with my body, pick a theme that's inspiring to me, or just be in a place of gratitude.

It's not unusual for me to jot down some incredible insights. But if nothing else happens in those 10 minutes other than feeling gratitude radiate throughout my body, that's a great start to the day.

**[00:10:05]** For your practice, consider how to habit stack to get you started. How can you combine something you already do with your stillness practice? For example, on the mornings when I'm not heading to CrossFit, I set my coffee pot to brew at 4:45. I get my coffee at five and then do my morning practice while enjoying those first few sips of my favorite beverage.



Another way to establish your routine is to engage your senses. Perhaps soft music works for your practice, or a scented candle, or being outdoors. Use whatever helps you connect to your intuition.

Remember that there's no right way. This is not about getting a technique right. It's about finding an authentic way for you to quiet your mind and access your inner wisdom. Personalize your approach and note all the ways this strengthened connection is supporting your life and helping you develop and grow.

**[00:11:15]** Speaking of growth, your practices are dynamic. There'll be times when you feel pulled to amend them and for good reason. Here are some things that can indicate it's time to make a change to your stillness practices.

The first is you've experienced a major life change. For example, perhaps you've been visualizing, but a family member becomes ill. You may choose to switch to a metta meditation as a way of caring for your family and showing self-compassion to yourself during a difficult time. And if that person transitions, you may then choose long walks in nature as your practice to help with the grieving process.

Next is you've grown personally. If you began connecting with your stillpoint using a meditation app, there will come a time when you want to deepen the relationship with yourself and experiment with other methods, such as holding a question that has meaning for you. You'll also find the more you practice, the



less external support you need, and the more frequently you'll be able to integrate the practice throughout your days.

Lastly, perhaps you've gotten an intuitive nod. As you continue to deepen your practice, you'll come across new possibilities via books, workshops or fellow travelers. Remain curious and open to new portals to explore. You never know where they may lead.

Isn't it interesting that the very practices that are developing your intuition are also being honed by your intuition. It's funny how that works. But keep listening to your inner wisdom and amend your practices in accordance. Do what feels nurturing and nourishing to your inner self.

**[00:13:15]** As we bring this episode to a close, I'd like you to think about what we covered today, including your self assessment and activity choice. Then design your practice and create your routine.

It doesn't have to be perfect. In fact, it won't be. All you need to do is to commit to a practice that resonates and then stick with it. I suggest 90 days. This will give you enough time to break through any resistance. It will also give you time to make sure you're connecting with your inner wisdom and enjoying the activity. And don't worry if you miss a day here or there. It won't impact the overall exercise.

So embrace this experiment. As you cultivate stillness, you'll experience a connection to your inner guidance, which can help you navigate life challenges, ignite creative sparks, and light a path of greater purpose and fulfillment. Your





mindful practice is a bridge that connects you to inner peace and your deepest authentic self.

I'll leave you today with a proverb:

*"Like a still lake reflects the stars above, the quiet mind reflects the truth within."*

Have an amazing day and I'll meet you right back here next week for Part Six of this series on heart-led living.

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**[00:14:48] 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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**[00:15:51] [END OF AUDIO]**