

Ep #002: Melinda Wittstock Interview

Vulnerable to Valuable

with Rosie Aiello



Melinda Wittstock

***"Love Yourself...
so You can Soar"***

Part 1



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Rosie Aiello

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Are you Smart? Accomplished? Have you ever thought you could handle it all?

So did our guest, a 7 figure entrepreneur who showed up well on the outside, yet unknowingly was slowly disintegrating within her 18 year verbally abusive marriage.

Even after she got out of that marriage, Melinda discovered she was still experiencing “echoes” of that narcissist behavior in others.

Hi, I’m Rosie Aiello and welcome to the Vulnerable to Valuable Podcast.

We talk about moving forward after experiencing narcissistic, controlling, demeaning and abusive relationships. If you’ve been in one of those like me, you KNOW what I’m talking about. You are not alone. You’ve been through some painful stuff ... shame, blame, that inner bully inside you. My mission is to lift and inspire you ... give you the ways you can reclaim your voice and value, your confidence, and the courage to BE the new empowered you.

Today we meet Melinda Wittstock. She gets vulnerable on how she lost herself, her business, and her money during a narcissistic relationship. She reveals how she turned it all around and reclaimed her value with gratitude, self-love and self-kindness.

You won’t want to miss her amazing journey to transformation.

We’re going to talk with Melinda in a moment, and first...

There are 11 pillars, which I reviewed in Episode 1, to guide you from Vulnerable to Valuable. If you want to know why 11, listen to Episode 1.

Today, I'm going to discuss each pillar a little bit more. In later episodes, I'll be teaching core concepts from the pillars. All of them will challenge your thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and actions. When you have the framework to create new thoughts and beliefs, you can move forward with confidence, feel empowered, and reclaim your voice and value.

As you listen to the podcast, see how many of them you can identify. Look, this process took me years, and now I can shorten that path for you.

Let's get to it. There are 11.

Number 1: Create a vision for your future.

You'll notice that most people who are successful have some vision. Sometimes it's not perfect, but that's okay. But if you have nothing to look forward to, even as bleak as it may seem, it's pretty difficult. So that's why we start out with this one.

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Number 2: Incorporate daily self-care strategies.

I can't emphasize enough, and you know it. You know it. Women, you, you put yourself at the bottom of the list. You're so burnt out from the relationship. You have very little energy, and it is so important for you to really start taking care of yourself. I'm going to be going into that so much more as we go through these series.

Number 3: Discover what is really important to you.

I don't know about you, but I never even looked at what was important to me. When he told me what was important to me, that's what I began to believe. This is the beginning of really losing who you are. This is such an important one, and really a huge foundation for your path to your journey, to your freedom, reclaiming your voice and value. This is a key one.

Number 4: Learn to confidently ask for what you want.

Let me just say that, after 25 years, the "ask" was kicked out of me. I didn't even know what to ask for. If I even knew what to ask for, I surely didn't know how to ask for it. I was too afraid to ask. And yet, our needs and desires just go unwanted because we just take what people give us instead of stepping out there and saying, "This is how I want to live my life."

Number 5: Learn how to receive with grace.

We're good givers. You're a great giver, aren't you? Receiving? Yeah. Probably not so much. And with grace, when you get a nice compliment, can you just say, "Thank you," or you get all funny inside. We'll go into that a lot more. Again, all of these that I'm discussing here is every single one that I personally went through, and then I develop these strategies to help myself.

Number 6: Overcome shame and guilt.

Not that you really need. I lived in so much shame, so much fear to share my story, to share my problems, and this is a huge one that holds you back. It holds you back. But we're going to get to it and we're going to cover it bit by bit by bit. We're going to keep doing it and keep doing it.

Number 7: Learn the power of self-compassion and self-kindness.

It's so hard to go through this. And often, I was just with somebody today and blaming themselves. How much I blame myself? How much I put myself down? He had done it for decades, and now I was doing the same thing to myself. Giving yourself that permission to self-compassion and self-kindness is incredibly healing. I'll be going through a lot of that work as well.

Number 8: Uncover and find peace with emotions and feelings.

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This is a huge one. I did not have much of a vocabulary of words to describe emotions and feelings. I think a lot of us just have limited vocabulary, but there's so much more to express how we're feeling and to feel our feelings. It seems so scary to feel the feelings, but again, when you take the steps, it is so freeing. You realize that you can manage it, and it's a huge step towards building your resiliency.

Number 9: Heighten your intuition.

A lot of people will tell women, "Oh, you're so sensitive. You don't know what you're talking about. You're not logical." Even though maybe in our work, we're very logical. But when we get into a personal relationship, we start to get frequently attacked by people's comments. I got this all the time from my now former husband. Had I known what the characteristics were, which I want to get to in a minute, but I heard my intuition sometimes. I didn't really know what it meant. I didn't really know how to tap into it and I didn't know how to act on it. We're going to go through all of that in number nine.

I want to just say before I get to the last two that as I do these - they're not going to be necessarily in order - I'll be picking and listening to the podcast. If I hear a particular topic that my guest has talked about, I will tap into that one so you can hear, training on it and then you can hear actually what that woman has done in real life.

Number 10: Understand healthy and unhealthy relationship characteristics.

While you may have experienced an unhealthy relationship, you may not have actually labeled it other than, "It's narcissistic or abusive or controlling." But what really does that look like in the same thing with healthy? What does a healthy relationship look like? You notice I use the word "healthy". I don't use the word "loving" or "kind". We want to focus on all healthy relationships or kind relationships. This is a real key one as you go out into the world and maybe date again, find somebody new, or if you're working with somebody or your "friends", maybe start to challenge some of those relationships that are not serving you anymore.

Number 11: Honor yourself with healthy boundaries.

I will be sharing what the definition of boundaries is and how you can reframe this and really show up your full self, your full integrity with yourself so you know who you are, what you want to do in this life, and how to move forward.

On every episode of Vulnerable to Valuable, we're going to go deep into at least one of the pillars. Sometimes they'll take two. Some I go to three because there was so much discussed in that episode. But these are so you. You can learn the steps to a new empowered and joyful you.

If you want to know where you are on this path, take the Freedom Fulfillment Quiz, my gift to you. In 4 short minutes you'll discover where you are and where you want to be.

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Go to: www.FreedomFulfillmentQuiz.com

You can find this LINK and all other links mentioned in the show notes.

Today we're going to meet Melinda Wittstock, a 5 time serial entrepreneur who put self-care first "who lived through all these phases ... and is now out the other end. She shares what it was like to rise from the bottom mentally, emotionally and financially so you can tap in, take on, and take off to soar in your life. [(benefit, benefit, benefit)].

If you don't know Melinda, she's the CEO-founder of Wings Media, the founder of the first interactive, social and "gamified" podcast network and audience engagement platform launching in 2020 with 100 top podcasts. Melinda also hosts the fast growing "Wings Of...Inspired Business" podcast named by Entrepreneur Magazine as #8 of 20 of the top business podcasts for 2020 as well as transformational retreats for women entrepreneurs Wings of the Empowered Woman.

Melinda will be here in a moment and first ...

Thank you for downloading the Vulnerable to Valuable Podcast produced by the Love is Kind Network. We're just starting out, Please subscribe. Every 5 star review on iTunes and every share will help our mission to reach and impact 100M women worldwide who been affected by narcissistic relationships and domestic abuse. Our goal is to create kinder intimate relationships, kinder families, kinder communities, and a kinder world. Will you help us achieve that goal?

Now to the inspiring Melinda Wittstock, a smart and outstanding woman who got emotionally whipped by a narcissist only to rise up stronger than ever before.

Let's go from Vulnerable to Valuable with Melinda.

Rosie Aiello: Welcome, Melinda. I can't believe you are actually here with me, with us going to be sharing your incredible story. And I so appreciate you taking the time to be here today.

Melinda Wittstock: Thank you, Rosie, and thank you so much for doing all that you're doing in the world. It's so important and, obviously, very close to my heart, given my own experience.

Rosie: But first, before you share with the audience about your own personal experience, let's let them know where you are today and all the incredible things you are doing in the world today.

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Melinda: Well, thank you. I'm an entrepreneur, I've always been an entrepreneur, and I'm on my fifth business and I'm super excited about it because it feels like everything is in alignment. I've launched a lot of businesses in the past where it felt like pushing a boulder up a mountain because it just wasn't quite aligned.

I've created a podcasting network and an audience engagement platform that is really the first of its kind.

For the first time, podcasters will be able to share in the revenue of the network and have real insights into who their audience actually is - their demographics, their psychographics, their habits, their influence, all of this - and be able to engage them on topics that they're really interested in around shared circumstance, shared interests.

Rosie: That's so beautiful because as we go into this world, and our listeners, you're listening through a podcast format, and it's that shift, as we go from vulnerable to really being out there. I know this is being vulnerable right now with me, just stepping out there, but that's how we make that shift.

Tell us a little bit about your background before you shifted into this super-empowered state, helping others with their voice.

Melinda: Oh my goodness. I had a very successful career for many years. To join the Times of London as a journalist at age 22, to create a show for the BBC and grow that audience to 20 million, to launch a whole series of successful businesses, but somewhere along the line, I got married to the wrong man. I didn't really realize it at the time, although I sort of did, when you look back, with 2020 hindsight, and you can see all the signs in retrospect. But at the time, I didn't and I'm highly empathetic and empathetic women, particularly successful ones, have a tendency to attract narcissistic men and I ended up marrying a combination of my own parents.

I can see all this now. I look back, like where I am again and where I was before him, and I think - I don't even recognize myself - how could I have allowed this to happen? You go through all these different stages of blaming yourself actually, like, "God, how could I have been like... Oh, how could I have been such an idiot?" all those kind of things.

I've arrived at real peace with it now because it was an experience like we get in life often. The challenges, the setbacks, the really difficult, icky things are often really the gifts that give us insight and give us perspective and give us a means, really, to help other people. But it had for me, for whatever reason, maybe I'm just kind of thick-skulled, it had to be really hard, really bad, before I could start my recovery process from it, and the recovery has been really beautiful, a really beautiful thing.

Rosie: Thank you for sharing that because I think so many women, the first thing we do is we blame ourselves. We take on someone else's responsibility and we put it on ourselves and we

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think we can fix it. We stay in that because, well, we're empowered, we're doing really well in our business, we're showing up really well on the outside. We're used to being in that role and so, of course, we can fix this. We can do this. What happens in the meantime is that we get diminished further and further because nothing we do helps, and in fact, it makes it feel worse because we're not making any progress in that, and so it goes back to what's wrong with me?

Melinda: The biggest epiphany that I had, and it took me a long time to get there, was that he would not have been in my life and his comments and barbs wouldn't have landed, they wouldn't have had any impact on me if I didn't have something within myself, that deep subconscious iceberg, that believed it.

We all go into life with beliefs and fears and limitations and things, stories we've told ourselves when we're little kids like between the ages of zero and six. Some people who believe in epigenetics say that some of these beliefs are inherited and we don't even know what's driving us. When we get triggered by things or when we get upset by things or when we find ourselves in really difficult situations, often it's because we have a belief. There's something that we need to shift and heal within ourselves.

I found a really curious thing that happened. On my recovery from getting out of this abusive relationship, for several years after, there were echoes of him in clients, in vendors, in team members, even an investor, who were all behaving in this bullying kind of way and it was sort of like the universe saying, "Are you sure, Melinda? Are you sure you've resolved this thing?" because everything emanates from within ourselves.

I know this is a controversial thing to say in this context because while we're victimized, we're not victims and these things are opportunities, but it's so difficult to see that when you're in it, when you're in it in the time. So there's a real progression, a real kind of long healing process that got me to this place here now where I feel kind of at peace with it. If you'd talked to me even two years ago, it wouldn't have been the same words like peace.

Rosie: Or joy, feeling the joy. I think what's so good is for women to really understand that this is a journey, everyone is on a different path, and to start coming to this realization that, yes, you were a target, you were a victim, but you don't need to stay in that role and your life is so much more important and you can change it. Although you may think, "I will never love a man again," some women are still in that stage and they're not quite open about how can I possibly change, but here you and I are absolutely living evidence of that.

You know that I have a whole program of really covering 11 key factors of this transformation from feeling this abused, small victim, shamed woman to do the feeling empowered and really reclaiming her voice and I know we've talked about this a little bit before.

What was the vision that you had for yourself of the possibility of what your life could be and say, "I'm not taking this anymore"?

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Melinda: It's interesting. I wonder if there was any ever time. I remember, very clearly, a time where I had thought to myself in the middle of this relationship, in the middle of this marriage, because I had two young kids and I'd convinced myself that it would be bad for them if I left and, actually, the reverse is true. Because there was this epiphany that, oh my goodness, I'm teaching my daughter that it's okay to be treated like this by a man and I'm teaching my son that it's okay to treat women like this. At that moment, I was just like, oh my God, no, this has to stop.

I remember having a very clear recollection of thinking, one day, "Oh man, this is it. All the things I dreamed of, all those things, I can't have those things because I'm stuck here." It was a weird thing, it was almost like a reverse of seeing what I wanted but immediately thinking, "Oh well, as long as I'm in this situation, I can't have those things," that's kind of how it came to me initially. Then I think the way I started to heal, what happened to me is I had no idea of what was going on. I was in such denial, I couldn't even admit it to myself and I had two incidences where I was in a Barnes & Noble bookstore - remember them?

Rosie: Yeah, love them.

Melinda: I was walking through the aisles and this book popped up at me one day saying, *Should I Stay or Should I Go?* I picked it up and it was all about narcissists and drug addicts and alcoholics and what they do and had all these quizzes to see if you recognized yourself. I was getting like 9/10 and 10/10 and 10/10 and I was like, oh my God. It shook my world because I was being gas lit all the time, I realized I wasn't crazy.

Then the next thing, it really hit this horrible thing where I was just like, 2013, I was just in this fetal position. It was really bad and I had another walk through a bookstore and this time, I saw this book called *Gratitude*. It was written by the same woman who did *The Secret*, Rhonda Byrne, and I picked it up and I started practicing gratitude. I tended to go all-in on things in my life, so I did this two-hour gratitude practice every day for a month. By the end of the month, I just felt so good. My circumstance, I found so many things to feel good about that something must've really shifted within me and different sorts of people started coming into my life.

It would be a while until the separation actually happened, until the divorce happened, but that gave me, really, the fuel to start to actually dare to dream of what I wanted, to feel that I was enough to even ask for what I wanted. I was almost in apology for, even quietly to myself at that time, I couldn't even kind of dare imagine that I wanted X amount of money or I wanted to live in a beautiful house or I wanted to have this or I wanted to have that or whatever it was that was external to me, or to dare to admit that I was worthy of really being in a loving relationship.

I look back now and I think, wow, that's amazing. I just really didn't love myself enough or... I don't know whether it was that. I think I loved myself, I just think I didn't think I deserved it somehow. It was an odd thing and it was just these mental constructs that we get in that just don't make any sense. We've got to be so careful of what we think because we get what we think.

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Rosie: Although women don't really feel it at that time because they're so unaware of it, and when I tell women, I go, "You deserve..." I love when you use the word "dare" like, oh my gosh, almost you dare to open the door and say I can live in this world the way I want, a dare. We shouldn't have to live in dares like, oh my gosh, I dared to go out by myself.

Melinda: You see, this was so contrary to me because I was the girl who everybody in college said, "What? You want to move to London and work for a national daily straight out of college? You can't do that." I said, "Why not? I'm a Canadian, but yeah, of course, I'm going to work on the London Times, the most famous newspaper in the world. Yeah, no problem." They all told me I couldn't do it and I was like, "That's ridiculous. I can do anything I like," and I did. I joined the paper at 22.

Then the next thing that happened, I remember I was on The Times and I decided I really wanted to make the move into television and be a television news anchor, and again, everybody said, "You can't do that. Nobody does that." I said, "Well, how hard can it be? I can do it," and within a month, I was anchoring and creating shows for the Financial Times with CNBC in Europe and Asia, and then I was anchoring for the BBC. So where did that woman go?

Rosie: Exactly. That's exactly it. That's the whole thing, it's like now you went into a time to reclaim the real you, where this man... And I hope people are listening to hear that this has nothing to do with your intelligence.

Melinda: Right, and I have a really high IQ.

Rosie: Right, exactly. And yet how quickly we got whipped around. You mentioned gaslighting, which is they tell you one thing and then they tell you another and then you think you're crazy because they keep changing the information.

Melinda: While you're talking about gaslighting, Rosie - I'm sorry to interrupt but I know I'll forget this if I don't say it - I remember there was this one moment where a friend of mine was explaining to me gaslighting because I didn't even know what it was, I'd never heard the term. He just said to me, "Why don't you try this, next time, he's talking to you, just say something completely nonsensical and you'll realize that he's not even listening to you," so I tried it.

One day, he was yelling at me or whatever and I said, "Have you noticed the windows are two inches too short?" I would just say really weird things and it wouldn't even register with him. And then I began to realize I'd gotten a lot more confidence then because I realized it really wasn't about me; it was about him. It was about his own insecurities and his own projections and his own fears and his own stuff. I just happened to be standing there and it wasn't actually personal. It wasn't actually anything to do with me; it was to do with him.

Rosie: And to create that separation, that realization was really huge. I think the other thing I want to make sure to emphasize is that being the role model for your children. You were the

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disruptor, I was a disruptor, and I encourage women to be the disruptor and own your own life. Yes, it's really hard to do, but God, look at the lives we have now. It's incredible. But I also know that there was a process of forgiveness and self-forgiveness. Do you want to share a little bit about your journey on that?

Melinda: Forgiveness is actually a really interesting thing. It took me a long time. It took me a while to forgive myself because, like a lot of people, we all have judgments, we all have that inner voice that talks to us the way we wouldn't allow our worst enemy to talk to us and yet we tolerate it. So much of it, for me, was getting, first of all, conscious that that was even happening. It's really about awareness - so many books, lots of coaches, lots of meditation, lots of yoga, learning visualization techniques like intention setting, vision boards, gratitude - I did all of it.

The thing that really changed a lot for me, there were two things, I read a wonderful book called *The Surrender Experiment* and *The Untethered Soul*, both by the same author, Michael Singer, and really the central point of this is when you get triggered or upset by something, it's actually an opportunity. It's an opportunity because it unearths a little chunk of that iceberg that's hidden that's the negative belief that's holding you back or attracting the wrong people into your life or the wrong energy. Those trigger points are an opportunity to, first of all, know that there's this unseen driver, there's this unseen thing.

So whenever you get emotional or you get angry or you get pissed at someone in traffic, whatever it is, or you're judgmental of somebody else, whatever those things are, they're just opportunities to say whatever this is, I don't need it anymore. I now officially say goodbye to it, release it, it's gone. It took me a while, being very intellectual, very much in my left brain, to be able to just accept that that was the case, that I could just do that. I couldn't say, "Oh right, I don't need this. Thank you, goodbye." But I gradually just got into doing that and all these things just started changing, disappearing for my life, like all that friction. I don't really get triggered by much anymore and if something bothers me, it's just like, "Oh, wow. How interesting." It really revolutionized my life.

And then the piece of forgiveness that was huge for me was realizing that really what happens in our lives and our responsibility for our own happiness is within ourselves. We can give our power away to other people, but we don't have to. We're responsible for our own happiness and what we think and what we conceive and what we believe and all of those things creates what we manifest. We can manifest bad things, good things, all sorts of things, but without letting go of the stuff that holds you back, it's very, very difficult to do that. The more I realized that my destiny or my happiness was entirely from within, I could very easily and very quickly then to get to the point where I could forgive him, I could forgive myself.

It was probably harder to forgive myself, but ultimately, the forgiveness for him was really, really tough. It came, actually, at a place in Costa Rica called Rythmia, where I was doing plant medicine, or Ayahuasca, which really... My goodness, it's hard to even know how to describe it.

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It is medicine. Some people think it's just this hallucinogenic thing. It's not recreational; it's medicine and you really are confronted with things that you may not want to see in your life and you have the opportunity to let them go. It came to me in this vision that I was inaccessible to my children and I thought, "Wait a minute, I love my children. I'm there for them all the time. How could I be inaccessible?" but it was clearly in this vision.

I sort of investigated that on this journey and you know what it was? It was because there was parts of them that remind me of him and there are parts of the way he still, to this day, speaks through them, there's a joint custody agreement, and that would trigger me. I realized unless and until I forgive him, I couldn't really be there 100% for my children and that was just... I was just weeping with this because, gosh.

And so that journey, those sorts of things. If you want a really quick fix, that's a great way to go because it's a little bit harsh, it's going to get you, and if you're willing to really confront these things and really deal with them, if you really do want to get out of a bad situation or change that thinking within yourself, I couldn't recommend that highly enough. That's, honestly, what got me to forgiveness.

Rosie: That's beautiful. What I'm seeing and what the whole purpose of this podcast, too, is to really give women all these tools to help them start to, one, become aware and take the action. We can just hear, through everything, that you are a woman of action. You did things to shift, you did things to shift from that vulnerable to now really feeling valuable, to really reclaiming your voice. You weren't just sitting down, wondering when is my life going to change.

I think, when women get into this zone, they are so confused, it's like there's nothing I can do and I think this has just shown, clearly, there is so much you can do and you are in charge of your life. I think that's when it changed for me too, is that realization that I get to create my life. You're creating your life and it's not going to be all peaches and roses and cherries and everything else every single moment, but God, what a blessing to create the life that we want with all the challenges that we have as opposed to living somebody else's life with all of their challenges and being a small person at the end.

Melinda: Yeah, it's really true. One of the ways I found my voice again is doing exactly what you're doing, Rosie. I launched a podcast and it was interesting. I felt, at the time, I was a little bit lost and I wanted to... I had always been an entrepreneur all my life, but I'd always felt kind of isolated as a female founder and I started Wings of Inspired Business. It really is this passion project because I wanted to speak to other women on the entrepreneurial journey about how they dealt with all of this. Not just business, but how business and life and all of it combined and how to really step into our authentic feminine power. I realized that so much of that, I think the best podcasts really are borne, just like, often, businesses too, are borne from our personal experience of something that we've been through that we really need to share with the world. And in finding our own voice, we do help find other people find their voice.

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I love that you're doing this podcast. It's so, so important because the more women talk about this, the more we're able to destigmatize these things and the more women will be able to see the signs and avoid getting into the situation, to begin with, or if they're in it, for anyone listening right now who's in this, there's no shame in this. This happens to really strong, beautiful, successful, smart women.

Rosie: All the time, sadly.

Melinda: And wouldn't it be nice to stop that and understand why that's happening and really let that one go?

Rosie: Absolutely, and not to feel like they're stuck and they have no choices.

We're here to show women you have a choice and you're not stuck.

My story, I'm looking to go into it, but with an international escape, talking about feeling stuck, but you can create it. There are all these options to a woman's life and to take off that veil of shame and feeling like a fraud and I have to show up really well. Because there's that dichotomy - I'm looking really good on the outside, everyone thinks I've gotten all my act together, and then I feel I'm not enough, I'm being browbeaten, if I'm still in the relationship, I can't get out, and it's like there's nothing and it's like what an empty life and this is your life. This is your life.

One of the things, too - you've shared a couple of them - but maybe some of your self-care strategies that you do. Because women are givers, as a population, we're giving, but then when we have been on the receiving end of being diminished, put down, belittled, it's like there's no time to even take self-care, but, wow, it's so important to really treat yourself.

Melinda: It's actually the very first thing you should do.

Rosie: Absolutely.

Melinda: It goes in my calendar just about before everything else, other than sleeping and eating, honestly. Because I can't run and grow a business and I know this. This is my fifth one, I've gotten other ones to seven and eight-figure success, I know that it's impossible without self-care and it's impossible to be the best mom you can be without looking after yourself. You also want to teach your kids and your team members or your colleagues or whatever. They learn from what you do, not what you say. We want to be the change we want to see in the world, so if we're denying ourselves, we're setting up and persisting a system of denial, which isn't good for anybody.

I think, right now, we're entering into a period of history of kind of like feminine energy, and I mean that in an archetypal sense, where it's a lot more empathetic and intuitive and collaborative generally. We're seeing that trend in a lot of businesses as well and just leadership styles and I think that's really great. So what better of a time for women to really be in alignment with what

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we need as women rather than trying to be in the hustle and the grind of the archetypal masculine paradigm, which it has been because that's how business was set up. That's how our society was set up, but I think there are a lot of profound shifts going on right now. For instance, self-care is vital.

My self-care routine is I wake up in the morning - and it's fluid, it can change depending on what's going on. We got a puppy over the summer, so that disrupted my morning routine a little bit. I always meditate in the morning, every morning. On the rare occasions that I miss that, I really can tell the difference by about 2 or 3 in the afternoon, my day is just not going as well. In my meditation, increasingly, I start to get downloads or like what should I be doing today, what's the best use of my time. I start to get a lot of inspiration and I've started to get very disciplined about acting on the inspiration I get through my morning meditation.

Anyway, it's morning meditation, I do a lot of things with my dog. I have always had a golden retriever by my side. I'm on my third and Augie is nine months old and we go for walks in the woods. I find I have my best ideas when I'm in nature, and that's really true for women. We really need to be around beauty and nature. The beauty of nature is so important. Whatever that is to you, that's really important for women.

The other thing that I do that's sacrosanct in my calendar is I have a 90-minute massage once a week, without fail. Same time every week, same person, in the calendar, it is not movable. I will not move it for anything. There are these things that go into my calendar before anything else goes in and I have to be very disciplined and true to myself and sticking to it and choosing... Again, it's like valuing yourself enough to choose what you value and be willing to say no. Having those boundaries of knowing what you want, taking it without apology because you deserve it, you're valuable, it's what you need, and other people always understand. And if they don't, they're not the right people for you.

Rosie: Absolutely. Those were really great examples and I hope the people listening, it's like, "Oh, I have to take care of my kids, and I have to do this."

Melinda: And I do all of that too.

Rosie: Exactly. To realize that what I teach is that women, your cup has to not just be full, it needs to be overflowing, for it to be overflowing. Because if your cup is full and you start burning out, it's going to be half-full in just a very short amount of time.

Melinda: Yeah, you're not good to anybody. It's particularly true of women, we need to replenish. It's so, so important.

Rosie: It's a regular routine.

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Melinda: Honestly, it means, for me, that I have to wake up kind of early in the morning but that's fine. I've just found that I go to sleep... My kids tease me because they're both teenagers and I can barely make it past 9:30 at night, but I also wake up at like 5:30 in the morning.

Rosie: I get that. I know exactly what you mean too. Tell us a little bit about that, because you mentioned a little bit before, about learning now to trust yourself, trust your decisions, trust you know who you're going to work with, getting in dating, deciding this is the man in my life. Because once we've been in these abusive relationships that we've been diminished, our ability to trust ourselves and others gets really challenged.

Melinda: Yeah, it does. Like I was saying at the beginning of the interview, I had, for a time, a whole bunch of I call them echoes where people showed up. And even just recently, I ended up working with a woman who was supposed to be doing my personal branding, who, oh my God, she ended up being this complete narcissist. She took my money and basically stiffed me, and quite a lot of money, and she did this to a number of other pretty high-profile women as well.

I look back now and I can see all the signs that she actually has a narcissistic thing going on. It's weird, you know that gaslighting thing, like night is day and day is night and all that weird stuff? She was doing all of that to all of us and we all got together and we all figured it out. So I still have to really watch it because it can happen, that kind of energy. It's an energy and it can find you.

Rosie: Yeah, and it's just all this, it's just the constant working on awareness and making those shifts and not blaming yourself that, "I got myself into this mess again." Do not have that kind of thinking, which is that whole negative thinking, it's like the judgment and everything else. We can just eliminate that and just get to the root of it... And sadly - I know I probably grew up in this little bubble, my guy tells me that - and thinking that everyone in the world is really kind and nice and it's sad to say that not everyone is kind and nice, but there are a lot of people who are and the majority are. Yet, there are other people who still are wounded and as they're wounded, they are projecting that wound.

Melinda: Absolutely. The tricky thing, I think, with narcissists, in particular, is they're very good at pretending to be empaths, so they're very confusing to an empath because they do all these things - they're a little bit larger than life, they tend to be really charming, and really amazing, and you're sort of blown away by them, and they seem too good to be true. That's because they are. There are these certain things, these certain patterns that you start to pick up over a time, but it can be really, really hard.

There's an increasing body of work now that show that, particularly high-intelligence, high-empathetic, successful women, tend to attract these sorts of men because they... And I'm not entirely sure, I'm just hearing more and more and more about this, and I'm curious what that is about. Because the more we can recognize and diagnose these patterns, the more likely we can equip ourselves just to know. And the more I trust myself and really trust my own gut or

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intuition, I pretty much muscle test it now. If I feel drained in the presence of somebody or inexplicably tired all of a sudden, like I was feeling great but now I suddenly feel tired, or I just feel suddenly self-conscious whereas, moments ago, I felt really comfortable in my own skin, that's a signal for me.

Rosie: Yeah, it's really knowing all of those signs and listening to your body. Your body is going to really tell you. You're going to feel the tension somewhere, a lot of people in their stomach, it could be in your back, it could be in your chest. We start to feel something is off and to know who you really are and that you don't have... Just because they're known, they're this, they're that, we create this persona of them which is not really true and we feel like we owe them to be with them and to say, "I know she's really good or he's really good, so therefore, I should do that too." And when we get into the shoulds, that's another warning sign or a red flag when you start to say that and you doubt what your true value is.

I want to ask you, what does, "Love is kind," mean to you?

Melinda: Well, I love the phrase. It means a multiplicity of things to me. I think that the first person that we have to love is ourselves and I think we're often most unkind to ourselves. Women, generally, tend to put everyone ahead of themselves, which is not an act of selflessness, it's really an act of unkindness to ourselves. I think to be able to unlock the kind of love that truly is kind from another person, we first have to learn how to love ourselves and be kind to ourselves. When we catch that judgmental or negative voice, ourselves criticizing ourselves or judging ourselves or shaming ourselves, we really, really have to work on that and let that stuff go.

Assuming that that's all true, that we love ourselves, I think being in a really loving relationship. I believe that kindness in love is about letting the person you love be the very best person that they can be and allow them to be 100% fully in their own true purpose, even if that interferes with your own whatever. If you love someone, they need to be free to be who they are. So if you want to marry a cat, don't marry a dog because you can't change a cat into a dog.

Rosie: A lot of them try to make a cat into a dog.

Melinda: Right? So know what you want and then let that person be the best, support them to be the best person they can be and you deserve the same. I think that's kindness, that's the kind of selflessness in love where you're both in it to lift the other in that sense. And little random acts of kindness is a big part of it as well and, like any plant, it needs to be watered. Water everything with kindness.

Rosie: That's beautiful. You do have somebody special in your life now too?

Melinda: Yes, I do.

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Rosie: We've gone through this whole journey of being with somebody who was highly abusive, who almost destroyed our psyche and who we are, we went through different ways to come out of it and transform from being really vulnerable to now really valuing ourselves. And then still, this journey of freedom, what I call your freedom journey, is when you are constantly creating it and not taking advantage of what you have and to know that people are going to be coming out, because that's what the world is, and not to see it so naively. And to end up having somebody really who is treating you with kindness, respect, thoughtfulness, because you deserve it.

Melinda: Absolutely.

Rosie: How can our listeners find out more about you, Melinda?

Melinda: Oh my goodness. They can go to my website, melindawittstock.com; they can find me anywhere on social media, LinkedIn, [MelindaWittstock](#); Facebook, [Melinda.Wittstock](#); my public figure, I think, is Iam@MelindaWittstock; Instagram, [MelindaWittstock2020](#). I would love it if you all listened, downloaded, subscribed, reviewed too, my podcast, [Wings of Inspired Business](#). I interview amazing women like you, Rosie, who have built really successful businesses. I'm up at about around 450+ episodes, reaching almost a million people now, and Entrepreneur Magazine ranked us number eight out of 20 top podcasts for 2020, so was really, really excited about that.

Rosie: That's fabulous.

Melinda: So check out Wings of Inspired Business, and also, if you're a successful female entrepreneur, I run retreats for really wonderful women. Rosie, you came to one of them. It's called Wings of the Empowered Woman and we're taking applications now for our retreat in Costa Rica in November, so if you're interested in that, you can go to wingsexperiences.com/apply.

The other place you can interact with me is if you want to launch a podcast. I have a special free e-book to seven steps for how you can create a magnetic podcast and engage your true tribe and profit from podcasting. You can get that at wingspodcast.com/liftoff.

Rosie: That's beautiful. And listen, I know she gave you a lot. Don't worry about it, it's going to be in the podcast notes.

Melinda: Yeah, if you're driving, don't write that down.

Rosie: Yes, but it's all a lot of good stuff and you're going to want to do every single one of them. Just remember Melinda Wittstock and you're going to be able to find everything, so it's all good. Any other final words on how you transformed from being vulnerable to being valuable?

Melinda: I think it was just a deep look inside, being willing to be curious, being willing to learn, being willing to forgive, just being willing to follow the breadcrumbs to a personal

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recovery. I think that's it and it still evolves. It never really ends, but just being willing to do that and, ultimately, willing to forgive myself.

Rosie: Beautiful. Thank you so much, Melinda, for sharing your brilliance with us.

Melinda: Thank you, Rosie. It was such a delight and I'm so excited by what you're doing in the world. Thank you.

Rosie: Thank you. Have a great day. Bye-bye.

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