

Nancy McKay-Interview

Wed, 1/20 9:46PM 35:57

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

life, people, cancer, higher, called, process, drinking, nancy, power, dramatic, worked, alcoholism, changed, sober, friends, faced, alcoholic, feel, situation, stay

SPEAKERS

Nancy McKay, Brad Miller



Brad Miller 00:20

We have a great coach with us today, Nancy McKay. She is here with us from the coaching program called amazingoutlookcoaching.com. And she is all about helping people to move beyond adversity, particularly in the sense of breaking the cycle of healthy habits, behaviors, and addictions. So Nancy, great to have you with us today on beyond adversity. Thank you so much, Brad, it's a delight to be here. It's awesome to have you with us. And you are speaking out of your own life experience where you've had some adverse conditions of your own to overcome. And I'd like you to speak to that to our, to our audience for a minute about some of the things that you had to face in your life, some adverse conditions, I'd like to call them and then what you did to, to break out of that cycle yourself, tell us what the situation you found yourself in and what you did about it.



Nancy McKay 01:21

Okay. Well, first, I grew up in an alcoholic household, my father was an alcoholic. And my mother was a heavy drinker. And so I also became an alcoholic partly because of genetics, and partly because of how I chose to cope with life, and my father committed suicide in 2007. And that changed my overdrinking into alcoholic drinking. And I was having a difficult time coping with the grief and the guilt that I felt over his death. And it just really kicked my drinking into high gear. To the point where, one evening after happy hour and an argument with my husband, I decided that everyone would be better off without me. And I took my husband's handgun out of the nightstand and put it to my

head. And fortunately, the safety was on when I figured out how to release it in my drunken state, it wasn't pointed at my head thank God and the gun was it went off and the only thing that got shot was an innocent pillow on the bed.



Brad Miller 03:01

So holy cow what a dramatic story.

N

Nancy McKay 03:06

It was a it was a dramatic ending to my drinking career. Yep.



Brad Miller 03:11

So just basically when the gun went off and you killed the pillow I guess. Did that did that was that a wake up call for you?

N

Nancy McKay 03:19

That was it. That was a that was a that was my knock upside the head by the universe or God or whatever you choose to believe in your higher power and and that's all that's what it took for me. And I haven't had a drink since then. That was March. Well, that was March 13. Friday the 13th of March 2009 holy cow Wow. That is a dramatic story and you literally had a immediate you immediately stopped drinking right there that was it that was it. Because that's not the case with a lot of folks who deal you know with you know with substance abuse is it's got to be a long drawn out that's not to say that I didn't have my you know, my ups and downs in the years preceding that. You know, I had abused alcohol for a long time. And but it it was that



04:29

sudden,

N

Nancy McKay 04:31

category catastrophic instance, that changed, changed it for me why I knew that I could no longer safely drink and



Brad Miller 04:46

so the threat to your life by taking your own life or by accidental or whatever the situation would be just really got your attention. It became just a dramatic bold episode there and by I'm sure that wasn't the end of the debts can't be the end of the story. Because you didn't have to take that shocking moment that you had the dramatic moment and you got to implement it, you got to do something about it, because the alcohol is still available to you. The gun is still available to you that if you had sunk back into, you know, depression, or whatever it was, you know, it's still there. It's still there. So what were some of the things that you did then to respond to the ongoing, you know, pain that you were medicating with alcohol and

N

Nancy McKay 05:34

Right, well, so I started working a 12 step program. And fortunately, my neighbor, one of my neighbors was in a, and she took me to my first meeting. first couple meetings. I was absolutely devastated that it had come to that. And so that's, you know, and I, you know, so I, I worked, really good program. And I've stayed sober. It's almost been 12 years. And I've learned a ton about myself, and a lot about the disease of alcoholism. And I've learned a lot about mindset, which is what I've worked on with my clients now. And



Brad Miller 06:30

that is, that's awesome. Well, so it sounds like some of the actions you took after the shock of the I guess what to say, at a suicide attempt, but but the the, the, the, the drinking and the gun going off, and but you were able to seek out some help with a neighbor, a friend, and then you actually went to a 12 step program, and then you must have follow through as well, you know, so

06:55

absolutely, yeah, he did everything.



Brad Miller 06:57

Yeah, I didn't like the process, you do it the whole 12 steps that are trying to get it?

N

Nancy McKay 07:01

Yep. I was, I went through everything, you know, multiple times. And, you know, I, I attended meetings every day for over a year. And then, you know,



Brad Miller 07:21

you really committed to the process.

N

Nancy McKay 07:23

Oh, absolutely. I knew that my life depended on it. Yes. And there was no, there was no dancing around anymore. You know, I had in the years leading up to, to, you know, the Friday the 13th incident, you know, I had overdone and laid off and switch, switch flavors, and, you know, switch from hard stuff to wine, and, you know, whatever, you know, we all do it. And



Brad Miller 08:03

we try to kind of mitigate it or,

N

Nancy McKay 08:05

you know, nobody wants to quit drinking for crying out loud. You know, there's no fun in that. Right. But, you know, when, when you realize that the, you know, the gig is up. There was just no getting around it anymore. I knew that I couldn't drink safely. I knew that it would be. You know, it was just I couldn't do it. And I couldn't I couldn't do it to myself. And I couldn't do it to my husband, who was absolutely beyond devastated that I would even think about doing something like that. And



Brad Miller 08:55

back ever say, was he with you? Or was he president? I

N

Nancy McKay 08:58

was in the house. Yeah, he was in the living room, I was in the bedroom. And, you know, when we got home, we'd been to a happy hour, and I staggered out of the restaurant door. And when we got home, I'd realized that I'd finished the little tiny bit of wine that we'd had left in the bottle that we had in the fridge and and when we got home, I went

tammet you know, should have stopped at the liquor store. We're all out of wine. And he said, Well, I think you've probably had enough and that those few words just sent me on my way and I got mad and then I got sad and then I got suicidal. And he was in the living room, watching television and I went to the bedroom and had a really big pity party for myself. And By the end of it, I determined that, you know, everybody would be better off without me.



Brad Miller 10:04

Wow. And so this was a dramatic moment for him as well, wasn't it? Yeah. Yeah, that's awesome. Yeah, well, so you went to the 12 step program, and you follow through, which is, for folks who know about this type of thing, you know, it's not just a, you know, it's not just a few weeks thing, it is an ongoing thing for a long period of time. And it is an investment of your time and energy and your money and everything else in order to really seek out healing and wholeness. And I really commend you on that. And a part of the process, though, for the 12 step program is, you know, and those who are involved with it know is that you, you have to go to a deeper place, meaning a kind of a spiritual or a place greater, greater than yourself. And, absolutely, and I would just want to talk to you about that for just a few minutes here for you to respond to that about what part if any, did this play, you know, the part of the 12 step program about connecting to a higher power and your whatever you would terminate your case, a spiritual thing, religious thing, or through counseling or whatever? Tell us about the high if it was important to you and your healing process? And if so, how was it tell us about your journey, your spiritual journey in this process?



11:17

Sure.



11:17

Well,



Nancy McKay 11:18

I've always been a fairly spiritual person, I'm not a religious person by any stretch of the imagination. But, you know, it was at the point to the point where I, I could, you know, I found myself choking on the word God, when I first got sober. I had a tough time with it. And so for a while, I called God Murphy. I don't know why, but it just made it.



Brad Miller 11:49

I love it. That's great.

N

Nancy McKay 11:50

I made you know, I had to substitute the word because I guess I was just mad at God. And so But one day, it wasn't, you know, I got sober in March. And it was maybe May. So a couple months, I was. Well, it must have been even before the rafter I don't know. Anyway, it was dark. It was early in the morning, it was dark, the sun hadn't come up yet. And I was sitting on the patio, with my coffee, and my Marlboro lights. And I knew that I had to make this connection with my higher power, in order for me to get it, you know, and I hadn't really, you know, I hadn't been able to make this connection yet. And I sat there on my patio. And I closed my eyes, and I took a deep breath. And I said, God, if you're out there, you're going to have to show me a sign. And about, you know, less than a minute later, I started feeling warm all over. And it felt like the sun was just shining on me. You know, I could, I could imagine this golden light warming me up. And I opened my eyes. And it's still dark. You know, if the sun wasn't up, the sun was not shining on me. I wasn't warm from the sun. It was this, knowing that I wasn't alone, that I had this higher power. And it was the first time I'd ever felt that. And



Brad Miller 14:14

so did you find the warm glow? Did you find it comforting? Do you find it? Oh,

N

Nancy McKay 14:18

yeah, no, no, no, no, it was very comforting. It was. It was like, you know, ask and you shall receive sort of thing, you know. And it changed everything. It changed everything. Yeah.



Brad Miller 14:34

And how do you think this was played apart? Nancy and your, you know, you you've actually, you know, you've you faced alcoholism, you faced the challenge of the and I suit this experience you're sharing about was this after your dramatic experience?

N

Nancy McKay 14:49

This was Yeah, this was a couple months.



Brad Miller 14:51

So this part of your part of your healing process here. Yep. How do you feel like that was pivotal. If it was in terms of coming out to a better place,

N

Nancy McKay 15:04

it was hugely pivotal, because then I, I recognized that I actually did have a higher power, because I didn't really believe in that nonsense before. And it made it made everything so much easier, because I knew that I could hand anything over that I couldn't handle, I could hand it over to this higher power. And, and I did that a lot, you know, I just, you know, gave it up. And, and that ended up, you know, helping me immensely. Six years later, when I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, when I was going through the wait and see, period, before I had my surgery, I had a moment where I was just overcome with fear. And I was standing at the top of our staircase and getting ready to go down this terrorism. And I was just overcome with this horrible fear. And I stopped about, you know, a few steps from the top down and, and said, God, I can't take this I you know, you've got to take this fear away from me, because I'm flipping out. And by the time I hit the bottom of the stairs, it was gone.



Brad Miller 16:39

So do you feel like you were I just share with you some observations to make with you that you spoke of God a little more freely when you talk about dealing with your cancer situation? And you talked about when you started to deal with your alcoholic situation? Did you notice you're able to put a little more of a personality or identity or some sort of a framework on your understanding of a higher power? After? So working through the process a little bit? We're able to Yeah, well personals? What I'm trying to say.

N

Nancy McKay 17:14

Yeah, yeah, definitely. Definitely. I mean, I certainly, you know, I believe in the power of prayer. And I believe, you know, obviously, in a higher power, and it's, it's, you know, I've just, I've got a thing about organized religion, that, you know, doesn't, you know, kind of flies in the face of, of religion, but



Brad Miller 17:43

we're not going to have an organized religion, we're talking about your spiritual warfare.

And my know that some people experience their spiritual walk through organized religion, and some people experience it other ways. And I believe you can do both. But what I'm what I want to get with you is, it seems to me, Nancy, you were a little bit better equipped. When a dramatic situation regarding cancer came along a few years after you had your life threatening. Episode regarding your alcoholism? Do you feel like you're a little better equipped to handle this dramatic situation? Your life?

N

Nancy McKay 18:20

Oh, god, yes. Yeah. And I don't you know, if it, if I didn't, if I hadn't built up my spiritual practice, and had had become, you know, a believer in my higher power than, then things would have played out much differently. First of all, I don't know that I would have been able to stay sober. Without a spiritual backbone. You know, I think it's really difficult. If you don't feel like you have that element for you to really handle things that are that are, you know, difficult that are, you know, when you're faced with adversity, and I think you have to have a spiritual practice to lean on for that, and if it wasn't for that, then I certainly wouldn't have been able to get through cancer as as easily as I did. Well, wait,



Brad Miller 19:27

let's, let's talk about that for a second here. So you've you had the drama and the trauma of getting through your alcoholism. And now you're actually saying that you had a diagnosis of cancer, which is dramatic and of itself, but you literally just said, Nancy, that you got through the process of dealing with cancer easily. Now many people wouldn't say that would they? You know, the meat would say oh my gosh, cancer. You know, it's the creative drama, trauma life is you actually said tell me about this process. Are you now consider getting through cancer, use your term easily, but tell us about that. process of how you did that, after you've gone through, you know, the alcoholism and so on?

N

Nancy McKay 20:07

Well, yeah, I will. And, you know, when you're when you're faced with



20:18

alcoholism,

N

Nancy McKay 20:19

I guess, and especially how I came into it. And as dramatically as I got out of it, it does kind of change how you approach things, you know, things aren't quite as well, I don't actually, I was gonna say they're not quite as terrifying but, but that's not true for I would be lying if I said that. So I was scared to death when I was faced with the prospect of having cancer. I mean, I, as I said, You know, I was coming down the stairs that day, and I was overcome and, but it but my higher power took that fear away from me, and then I was fine. And I knew I would be fine. There was something that I knew. And when I woke up from my surgery, I found out that I had an early stage, ovarian cancer that normally isn't found. But fortunately, I had symptoms that normally don't come up. So I was very, very lucky. Now, I believe that my higher power had something to do with that.



Brad Miller 21:47

Sure. What you see, what you achieve was something that I think a lot of folks are after, which is peace of mind, you know that right? They get the peace of mind is usually not an instantaneous thing. For instance, when you had your, your, your suicide situation, it wasn't instantaneously that you woke up, you know, you shot the pill, you didn't exist to have peace of mind, you had to go through this process. Same thing with your cancer, cancer diagnosis, you had your shocking moment of the diagnosis, and the fear and the trembling and all that came with it. But you came to a place a little more directly a little more process oriented, have a peace of mine, Dale, and that's what people are after, I believe, Nancy is this peace of mind, you got to go through a process, you got to go through the adversity to find it. And a piece of that is you know, the the taking the bold action to do what you got to do your higher power, but another piece of it is health is relationships, loving, powerful life, Enriching relationships. Sounds like maybe your husband may have been a part of that process for you. But tell me about if there are people, for instance, in your groups, or people, your husband, maybe other people who may have helped you in the process, I call it a fuel for renewal. But tell me about any people or any processes that came with other people to help you in this process.

N

Nancy McKay 23:08

I tell you, I've I am blessed with incredible friendships. And I've I've got, you know, different groups of friends. And, you know, I've got a really tight group of high school friends that we still are, are, you know, just best of friends. I've got a really dear friend that I've known since first grade. I've got and that's a long time ago.



Brad Miller 23:41

And I've got I was I wasn't going there. But it's a long term relationship. Yeah, you know, a lot of people don't have that. Right.

N

Nancy McKay 23:48

Right. And then I've got, you know, incredible friends in the recovery community. And so, and now I've got wonderful friends in the coaching community. So it's, it's, you know, the coaching community friends weren't there when I went through cancer because that's post cancer, but my recovery friends and my high school friends and everyone was there for me. And that's, that was one of the gifts of, of being diagnosed with cancer was because the outpouring of love that I received

W

24:29

was

N

Nancy McKay 24:31

unbelievable. I mean, I had no idea that people loved me. Like they told me they did.



Brad Miller 24:40

And so give me an example about how some of the support or love or care was a part of your healing and wholeness process. Give me an example of either accountability or tough love or support, or something that happened to us because, you know, here I'll just go back with you. One of the things you mentioned two or three times in a part of our conversation, and it's about going to happy hour and things like that, that's when people that's one way people are seeking out, you know, something to fill a void. Right now you found something here that's a little different to fueled health and vitality. So tell us what, it's something that either somebody did or said or done to help you through this process.

N

Nancy McKay 25:20

Oh, gosh, there was so many things. Well, I never I never went to a chemo appointment by myself. Okay, that's



Brad Miller 25:27

awesome.

N

Nancy McKay 25:28

There was, you know, somebody came with me, every time and, and, I mean, one day, I had, I think I had four friends with me at different stages during the day. I mean, you know, nobody left me alone. You know, it was I was just held in so much support and, and I had friends come in from out of town, so they could go with me. And, you know, it was just, it was unbelievable. It was unbelievable and, and the support that I received from the people that I worked with, you know, I, I thought that I thought that chemo was going to be a cakewalk. And, and initially, I wasn't going to do it, because I had seen my mother suffer through chemo. And that a dear friend that I had worked with died as, as a result of from a reaction from chemo. So she went straight from her chemo appointment to the hospital, and she died 10 days later from our reaction. And so I was not going to have anything to do with that. Thank you very much. I figured that the treatment was worse than than the disease and I wasn't going to do it. And then here goes my higher power again, one day, for some reason, I just changed my mind. And I don't know why. Because I was pretty adamant that I was not going to go through chemo. And then one day, I decided that it was the it made sense to do it.



Brad Miller 27:08

Yeah. But you didn't do but you didn't have to go through it alone. Did you

👤

27:12

know,



Brad Miller 27:14

you were encouraged the process?

👤

27:15

Right? Right.



Brad Miller 27:17

And then also, when you have encouraging people in your life who fuel you on the positive way that helps you to also deal with any situations or even even purple people who may be toxic or unhealthy as well. Did you find that was the case that you may had to make some transitions and some not so healthy relationships?



27:36

Well, nothing came up after my cancer. But But, you know, there are, there are, there have been some relationships that changed when I quit drinking. And, you know, there are people that don't hang out with me anymore, because I'm not drinking alongside them. You know, and, and that's unfortunate. But that's, you know, that, that happens, you know, and and, you know, you hear that you have to change your playgrounds and your playmates when you get sober and, and that happens. I mean, people are, are uncomfortable around you, if you're not drinking like they are anymore. What do you



Brad Miller 28:23

say one of the things you like to say you're one of your mantras is you didn't get sober and survived cancer to be to be miserable. Yeah. And so part of the joy of life is when you have joyful relationships, but so many people stay in miserable life situations, even miserable relationships, because that's just what they're used to. That's what they I call it the malaise of mediocrity, you just stay stuck, right? And so you've chosen to get unstuck in your life. But I'd be interested now in some of the things that you actually do, what are some of the disciplines what are some of the things you did actually change your way of life, and that you now are teaching others I'm talking about disciplines or habits or practices or, you know, routines that you have in your life, and some of the things that you're teaching others in your coaching. So tell us a bit about how people can apply what you have learned and their life?



29:19

Well, what I help my clients with mostly is mindset work. And what happened to me after I survived cancer and and for you know, a couple years, right after that my perspective on life began to change. You know, I, I recognized that, you know, I tried to kill myself and and was unsuccessful. And then I got a disease that typically is terminal. By the time they find it, it usually is a death sentence. And mine was found very early. And so what happened to me was I, I learned that that I wasn't going to be miserable in my work anymore. My, my, I worked for a wonderful company, but I was unhappy. And I decided that life's too short to be unhappy. And so, the year that I turned 60, I started training to

become a life coach. And as a result of that, I learned a lot of tools that I now pass on to my clients and, and all of those tools are, you know, learning how to cope with life's challenges in a healthier way. And



Brad Miller 30:52

give us Nancy give us an example of one or two of those tools that you teach people. Then after that, I want us to, for you to tell me about somebody that you've worked with who's had some transformation that gives an example of those tools?



31:04

Well, one of one of my favorite tools is and it it's called the model, and it was developed by a woman named Brooke Castillo, who is a an amazing coach. And I went through Martha Beck training to become a life coach, as did Brooke. And, and both of those trainings, utilize something called the work, which was developed by a woman named Byron Katie. And so Brooke, developed a tool called the model. And it's based off of the work that Byron Katie developed, it's a kind of an abbreviated version of it. And what it does is it breaks down the process of when you have a circumstance in your life, and you have a thought about that circumstance, that thought creates an emotion or a feeling. And that feeling will drive an action that you take, and that action will give you a result. And you know, so and i don't know that Byron Katie was the first person to kind of land on this. I know, Pema chodron talks about all of this stuff, I think Wayne Dyer does, you know, it's just it's kind of a, it's a well known process, you know, that thoughts lead to feelings lead to actions and results. And so, you know, one of my favorite sayings is, you know, pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional. And it's not, you know, it's not the circumstance that creates your suffering. It's your thoughts about the circumstance that create your suffering.



Brad Miller 33:09

We like to think about it as adversity happens to everybody circumstances happen, but you choose if you're gonna stay stuck. Malaysia, Vietnam, Korea, what I call it, you can move through that move. There's always a wilderness experience, but you choose, you're going to go to the promised land or stay stuck in exactly prison, use a built up amount of metaphor, but tell us what I want you to speak down answer to that to that person, then woman who may be stuck in some situation in life who may be listening to our, to your voice in mind today, and looking to find a way to break out this pattern. And who is stuck, maybe it's alcoholism, maybe it's suicidal thoughts? Maybe it's a diagnosis disease?

Maybe it's dealing with this crazy COVID crisis and all the crazy pressures that go along with that? Or are some of the other things we have going on in our world right now, be it political or racial or any number of things, but speak speak to that, speak to that person for a minute, particularly in the context and maybe some people you've worked with? What are you going to say to that person? What are some results that they can have, if they get connected up with amazing outlook coaching?



34:14

I think, I think the biggest thing is that you don't have to stay stuck. If if you're willing to examine your thoughts and understand where they're coming from. Then you can change them. So if if for instance, you know, you you think that you're a worthless human being because you drink too much. You know, the the The first thing I'm going to ask you is, is that true? And then I'm going to ask you to give me examples of what makes that true for you. And then we're going to turn all of that around. And we're gonna, we're gonna look for how you want to feel in this moment and what do you need to think in order to feel that way?



Brad Miller 35:40

It's great. So this is the type of thing we're gonna find if, if we go to amazingoutlookcoaching.com.



Nancy McKay 35:49

That's, that's a very little tiny tidbit.