

Creative Aging Symposium 2020  
January 29, 2020  
9:00AM PST

## Contents

|                                             |     |
|---------------------------------------------|-----|
| Welcome.....                                | 2   |
| First Speaker: Nancy Cranbourne.....        | 7   |
| Creative Moment: Albertina Padilla.....     | 36  |
| Second Speaker: Debra Rapoport.....         | 44  |
| Creative Moment: Edythe Boone.....          | 67  |
| Third Speaker: Louise Aronson.....          | 79  |
| Wrap-Up Experience: David 'Lucky' Goff..... | 100 |
| Conclusion.....                             | 121 |

Captioning services provided by:  
Lori AZ Captions, LLC

\* \* \* This text, document, or file is based on live transcription. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), captioning, and/or live transcription are provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This text, document, or file is not to be distributed or used in any way that may violate copyright law. \*

## **Welcome**

>> Hello, everybody, welcome to the Creative Aging Symposium of 2020. I am hoping everyone can hear me. Katie, a thumbs up? Thank you, everybody, we're so happy you're here. My name is Amber Carroll, I'm the director of the Well Connected programs, Well Connected and Well Connected Espanol. All of us here at Covia are so excited about the next few hours when we'll be learning from some of the most innovative voices in the creative aging world. As you're taking in everything today, I want to invite each and every one of you to join us on the other 364 days of the year for the opportunity to connect with others through storytelling, virtual travel, museum tours, support groups, games, lifelong learning opportunities and so much more. Well Connected and Well Connected Espanol offer an array of all kinds of programs that folks can join from the comfort of home.

So leading up to the Creative Aging Symposium, we asked the Well Connected community the question: How does Well Connected fuel your creativity? With hundreds of responses, each one moving the next, I would like to just share a few of them. Patricia an 85-year-old from

Massachusetts said, it provides me a wide range of areas I'm interested in, some to learn about, some old friends I enjoy. It pushes me to think in new ways, to explore new ideas, even to try new skills or new colors. Where transportation can be a problem in a rural area, it makes me feel I have wings. And Sally, a 77-year-old from Wisconsin said, every time I attend a call, something sparks a light in me of something that I want to explore and share. And lastly, Laurie from Louisiana said the Well Connected community provides a new and exciting exploration of mental and spiritual avenues that expands my normal. More importantly, the connections I'm making give me hope for our future, exploration and hope are powerful forces in anchoring the aging pros to positivity -- aging process to positivity instead of fear and distress. If helping me to look forward to hope and to explore. So as we listen to the speakers today, please think about this question yourself, how can Well Connected fuel my creativity? With that I'm going to turn it over to the founder of the it Creative Aging Symposium, Katie Wade.

>> KATIE WADE: Hi, everyone, good morning, and thank you so much for joining us and thank you, Amber, for that

introduction to Well Connected. I am also a Covia employee with Amber and a big fan of Well Connected which is the program we're on right now. This is our third year hosting the Creative Aging Symposium. Today we will celebrate how creativity toys into resiliency -- ties into resiliency, how it builds into resiliency, shapes our sense of self and leads us to more purposeful leaving. To those the wisdom of those who spent decades and daily practices of self-expression we'll uncover our own potential for imagination and resiliency. I would like to start the day to set a scene a little to share a quote that's been meaningful for me and particularly important when we consider the link between creativity and resiliency. This is from Brene Brown and her book Rising Strong. Creativity embeds knowledge so that it can become practice, we move what we're learning from our heads to our hearts through our hands. We are born makers and creativity is the ultimate act of integration. It's how we fold our experiences into our being. So today we're going to explore what it means to integrate our sense of self through creative experiences, and I don't just mean art when I say creativity. I mean the broad sense of

imagination, this could be having a different type of conversation with your family or your doctor or your caregiver, it could be how you put that mustard on your sandwich for lunch or how you hang a photo on the wall or join a choir or paint a portrait, the broadest sense of creativity is what we'll explore today, so for our audience members throughout our time together, I would especially like you to consider what is it about being older that puts you in a unique position for creative growth? So next I would like to kick off this symposium by introducing Ron Schaefer, the chief operating officer at our nonprofit, Covia. Welcome, Ron.

>> RON SCHAEFER: Good morning. Thank you, Katie. Again, I'm Ron Schaefer, Chief Operating Officer for Covia, and I'm excited to join Amber and Katie in welcoming you to the 2020 creative aging symposium. Today's symposium is a gathering of people near and far, individuals who may be joining from their homes, their offices, or even their local public library, it's a gathering of groups who are meeting right now in conference rooms and auditoriums and it's people of all ages and seasons in life, which are not the same thing if you think about it. We can get all sorts

of seasons and all sorts of ages in life, but this symposium is a celebration around aging and experience gathering primes us for creative expression and creative growth. Creativity is a word you're going to hear a lot today. You've already heard it quite a few times in these first five minutes. Creativity is a means of expression, of beauty, of truth, of self-actualization, and it has its own value and importance in our lives because of that. But beyond that, creativity also shapes our perception, our minds, our thought patterns and breaks down the routines of mental patterns that we as humans almost eagerly get entrenched in. Think the same thoughts, seeing the world and each other the same way. Believing the limitations we artificially set upon ourselves. But creativity breaks those down and allows our mind and our spirit to see new opportunities, new solutions, new pathways to find new inspirations and to gain new perspectives. That is radical growth for us humans, no matter what our age or season in life. I'm excited for the day ahead, and I invite each one of us to set our intentions for this day as having fresh ears and fresh eyes and to welcome all of our corporate participants into our community of creative journeyers, I

would like to thank our sponsors who are supporting today's symposium for their support not only of today but also of Creative Aging in general, and those sponsors include Kaiser Permanente who has sponsored us at the advocate, Leading Age California who has sponsored us at the dreamer level, Engage and DOROT, at the innovator level, and closed captioning is provided today by Lori AZ Captions.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you so much, Ron.

>> RON SCHAEFER: Thank you.

**Speaker: Nancy Cranbourne**

>> KATIE WADE: All right. Well, I think we're ready to get started with our first speaker. So it looks like just before we start a little housekeeping. You may have noticed at the beginning that you have access to closed captions on your screen, if you click closed captions at the bottom, you also have access to live Spanish interpretation if you pick interpretation and choose the Spanish flag at the bottom of your screen, and I also want to give a shout out and a thanks on a co-host today who is joining me, Julie and Pfitzinger, you'll hear her, but first we'll start off with Nancy Cranbourne. Nancy, I believe you're with us?

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: I'm with you.

>> KATIE WADE: Welcome, it's good to see you again.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: It's great to see you.

>> KATIE WADE: She's the owner and director of One Big Yes Productions and 40 Women Over 40, a dance company in Boulder, Colorado. She's a dancer, a playwright, served only are performing arts, University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado State University, University of Washington and Cornish College for the arts, Nancy lives and thrives in Boulder, Colorado, where she is daily inspiring dancers to experience total acceptance of themselves through communal identity, so welcome, Nancy, we're Lucky to have you today joining us.

>> Nancy: Thank you, I'm so excited to be here, thanks for having me.

>> KATIE WADE: Nancy and I talked a bit about her work and how the act of being a dance teacher and a dancer creates some resiliency, so there's one experience of being in the room with the dancers, and Nancy, if you could tell us a little bit about the 40 Women Over 40 troop that you work with and how that translates to the world and taking that out into the world.

>> Nancy: Yes. Thanks, I would love to talk about that. I realized this morning when I was getting excited about this symposium that 40 women over 40, I started that so long ago, and then I realized how old I was by going back because it was almost 25 years ago that I started that company, when I turned 40. So how that came to be about was that I was in dancing with a company, it's called interweave dance theater, I came up in that company, I've been teaching and working with them for years, I adore and love them, that's an amazing community, but I was dancing with them and I was getting older and I looked around and noticed that oh, my gosh, I don't think I belong here anymore in this dancing with these amazing younger dancers, I would say kicking their leg up over their head and this is a real thing, you know, with dancers. I used to be able to jump up and go into like a James Brown split kind of thing and then get back up again which I thought was the coolest thing I could do until I wrecked my knee doing that one time and was limping off the stage but I still finished the performance, that's important to say, but the reason why I started it is because I looked around and saw all these dancers 40 and over that were amazing still that were

kind of depressed that they didn't feel -- they didn't not feel welcome, they just felt like they didn't really belong with these younger dancers, so I did a show that was actually on this workshop with Interweave Dance Theater, where we did Brick house and it was all these dancers over 40 and they just rocked the house, and why it was so inspired to actually create a company out of these, there was about 16 dancers at that point, was in the audience where they're expecting all these younger dancers who dance amazingly, they stood up in the middle of the show and were stomping their feet and clapping, I've never experienced that before in my life, all my years performing and dancing. And so I thought, oh, my gosh, you know, like you just know, it happens to me about once every literally 20 or 25 years where the idea just goes oh, my gosh, this is the idea. So that's where I came up with that, because I thought the people want this, because I think it's encouraging people of all ages, oh, my gosh, I can still do what I love, I can still do what I'm passionate about, and they just changed the paradigm.

So I was instigating making dancers over 40 cool, you know, rather than oh, she's old, she's like, you know, she

used to be a tap dancer and she's kind of withering away or whatever it may be. So the perception, I just didn't know how we would be perceived and it was just a beautiful outpouring of love and people running up and saying how can I get in your dance company? I said, well, are you over 40? And they would say no. And I would g you're going to have to wait. And it was the funniest thing to say, you know, it just turned everything on its ear. So I knew that that was a good idea because I felt it just in my being, in my soul, it just fired up inside. So that's how that happened. And it's been going, I mean, we've been dancing together, we haven't done a show for 40 Women Over 40 for a while, but we've been dancing together this entire time and I realize it's almost 25 years later and I'm looking at these dancers, they make me weep, they're so beautiful, and it's become -- it's a surge again, more people are in class and we welcome everyone to join ups at any level that they can dance because our community is so powerful and so positive that no matter what, it's just infectious environment for -- it's mainly women. There's one brave man who comes all the time, Eddy, and I just love him. It's always like, Eddy! But and all these women. But he's

a Lucky man. What can I say?

>> KATIE WADE: You know, what you're saying about the experience of the women must resonate to deeply. I was looking at some of the reviews that some of the dancers have written online and they really struck me as representative of how you talk about your work and one of them I read Brenda wrote that the classes raise my self-confidence, energize me and remind me that I can do way more than I ever thought I could and I just love that piece of it because it just speaks so much to strengthening ourselves and our resiliency, right?

>> Nancy: Yes, it really does. The thing is I think what it is now for me, now all these years later is the resiliency comes from going through a lot and as dancers we've gone through a lot because you're in the mirror constantly, which is not a great thing to always be in the mirror, you're always comparing yourself to other people. You've got injuries. You've got limitations. And you have to come into this really beautiful place of radical self-acceptance, and that radical self-acceptance is hard lined. If everything is going great, you don't have to incorporate -- it's part one. If everything is going

great, you don't have to incorporate radical self-acceptance. As I was getting out of bed I was like oh my gosh I was a musical instrument onto myself because everything was cracking and popping and creaking, and I get myself standing and stand there for a second, but the minute I start moving or thinking about dancing, it's like something happens to me and I'm infused with like a deep inner joy. So in our classes, that's what we're infusing, we infuse each other with it, it's this deep inner joy about just being in the same room together, always creating something, we're always creating something beautiful together. And those electromagnetic fields are very powerful that come from us inside of us and go out, and then we join, I call it, I think it's calls a vesica pisces when two circles intersect, we create an energy and literally it's like the most beautiful thing, it's like falling in love every day with just being alive and being together and then also I love music, rhythm, I resonate so deeply with it and have since I was a little tiny child. So for me, it's all just -- it all just works, it's kind of like a pulse that we share a heartbeat there, and I just -- I just look around and I can't believe how graced I am by

these souls who come to take dance class from me but really we're all creating this together all the time. And it is, it's an initiation every time we're in there, we get initiated into, we're bigger than us because we have each other.

>> KATIE WADE: Oh, my goodness, I love that description of doing something creative together and the power of the community around that. Right? I'm sure you dance alone in your house, right, which is one thing, and then there's this different thing happening when you're together.

>> Nancy: Yes, and the thing is I would always make this joke that I can't even do a plie myself because I have to have other people help me, it's a joke, but really, when I'm with a group, I don't feel like I'm talking, I feel like the information is coming into me and it's coming out my mouth and I'll say to the class, I don't even know where that came from, because I think when you do anything creative, you're tapping into such a wellspring of wisdom and of vast knowledge that is available to all of us and so if you kind of just ask for it a little bit more to come through, it starts to come through and my therapist, which, you know, you can imagine how many hours she's got under

her belt with me, she would always say, do the big ask. And I go, what do you mean? I go, I need help. She goes, like did you ask the big Kahuna, the big God or the big wherever you -- or whatever, mine is like the universe, I'm asking the universe, and the universal energy to help me. And she goes, did you remember to ask? And I go no, I forgot. I always remind my students, if they ask me, ask big, ask big, because we're meant to live these large, large lives, you know.

>> KATIE WADE: I feel like I have to write that down, I love that.

(laughter).

It's so important in our nonprofit work I'm thinking but I also wonder what other ways in your life do you find that, that's such a specific skill to learn, maybe dance is one way you use that, are there other areas that bleeds into, that concept? Is.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: For me in relationships, is that what you're asking too, some people say I always have problems being with a male partner, that's not my thing, but my thing is I have deep deep female friendships and when those have a rupture or a wound, it really affects me

very, very deeply, and I can't stand having that, not being resolved with somebody. As I've gotten older, I've learned to sit with not being resolved with an issue, and that has led me to better decisions when resolving something, or choosing to not resolve something. So that would be an ask big for me, when I need help with a girlfriend that I'm having -- you know, there's some misunderstanding, it kind of takes me down to come a three-year-old where I just feel very overly pleasing and kind of I feel like I'm doing -- I'll do anything to keep the friendship, and then I have so much more wisdom now that I'm older, which is a beautiful thing about getting older, that I do ask big in those situations for help with that, for wisdom, for what to say, for when to go in and when to pull back, and I'm always working, I've been working for years on the people pleasing to have that not be my main thing and be more centered in myself. So that's one of those places.

Certainly my marriage. Certainly in my marriage. My husband and I are completely like polar opposites of the brain, and so but together we are a really great brain, you know, if you just meld them together. He is like Mr. Scientist, Mr. Math guy, the fact that I'm even on here

with you today Katie is a miracle from God that I could actually get on this thing. You know what I mean? I just don't think like that. So yeah, in my relationship, just with my husband and all my relationships now, my philosophy is just to go in and just be in my spiritual practice in every moment be present and come with love, just love, how can I love my husband, when he's talking about his tools and his shop, and I glaze over and I practically fall over in a faint because I don't know what to say, you know, that kind of thing. Or we just think very differently. But we love each other insanely. So how am I going to make that work? Am I going to be frustrated all the time that that's -- you know, he doesn't think like me, that would be the way I would say it in my head, why can't you just think more like me? Well, he's a beautiful thinker, but how to love him for all of it, love him for all of it, and so that's a place where I ask big. I really do ask big there because sometimes I'm just, you know, tearing my mayor out rolling my eyes and I also leave the room at that point for five minutes, calm down, so I don't come with that kind of yucky anger. I come with, you know, I'm delightful and charming, Katie, at all times.

>> KATIE WADE: Why, of course!

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: Yeah.

>> KATIE WADE: The reason I asked about how that translates into other areas of your life is you so beautifully illustrated which is that when we have a creative practice, it's not like a separate thing, right?

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: No.

>> KATIE WADE: It is your spiritual practice and your physical exercise and your community and then it translates into this skill that you have in all these other places, right? And I think that's kind of, for me, that's where the magic of creativity and resiliency is, that all those things weave together, they integrate.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: They do. It's all the same practice. I used to feel going into class oh, I'm going to rev myself up, I'm going to be this show person or I'm going to do this, and now it's not such a line I'm crossing. I'm just floating into the class and my skills or whatever I've got to bring, what I have to offer is heightened there and I become someone that I look at and go, gosh, I just -- I can do that, I don't know, it's a gift, it's a practice and a gift, I've been doing it for a

long time, but I never forget to be grateful for the gift and the practice. But then just going out, you know, like what I try to do now, say, for example, this is a good shift, I realized I didn't even know I was doing it but I realized I would come a little early and I would try to greet everyone who comes in the class and give them a hug, try to get to everybody and hug them, definitely look in their eyes and say hello and really be present with them for a small conversation or whatever like that. I used to shoot into the class when the ego was in control, I would shoot in, I would make an entrance. Boom. Here she is. And you know, that's the performer part, the younger performer part, you're going to make yourself known all the time in every situation, grocery store, dance studio, stage, whatever it is.

Now, it's very much about that inner personal connection and loving these mostly women but men when they come too, loving them into the class. So I would want to go and hug, I say hi, and I'm not maneuvering it, I'm just knowing that this is how would I want to take a class now? That's what I would want. I would want someone to warmly greet next learn my name, say how glad they are, you know, that I was

there. So it's just kind of, yeah, it's everywhere, and then the creative part of it, in every part of my life I feel like I'm an artist. In the morning I wake up, and this is just me, I love to get dressed in the morning. I love to put on my makeup. I love to put on my glasses. Every part of adornment, I enjoy it fully. I never got -- that never went away for me or changed. I always wanted that. And when I'm cooking, you know, cooking something last night and I know I'm going to bring it to some friends tomorrow, I want to cook that with my love in there. I want to taste it and say they'll love that. So I think artistry goes in everywhere.

Like I do painting, these weird paintings, they're disturbing, I won't show them to you, but it just goes everywhere. And I think that's something about just letting things flow a little more and accepting. Like I do these weird paintings and I go well, I don't think they're great or anything, but they're just my expressions. I don't care. Now, that's the beauty of getting older, I don't care what anybody thinks, I just want to make stuff. I just want to make things. Yeah.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah, I think that's going to resonate

even more deeply when we have Debra come on later who is a personal adornment professional.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: Woo-hoo!

>> KATIE WADE: I know. She talks about that, you know, removing the rules around creativity and exploration and then you can just play, you know.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: Yes. Well, I was talk to go a great friend of mine yesterday, Shelly, she might be listening in. Hey, Shell. We were talking about certain things and I'll just say my part of it, for me, what I feel now, which I've been working towards my whole life since I was a little girl, I always have this, and I've said this in therapy for 9,000 years, so I've been in therapy for 9,257 years, and I always say I always want to get back to the sunny child that I was that was like the towheaded blond and this is a true thing, I was running around naked in my backyard and I lived in California so I would roll in the mud and I would jump in and my mom would hose me off and I would have sticks in my hair and I would just be laughing and jumping around and this is my essential self, you know, in hard times how do I get back to that, or just for maybe years how would I get back to that? I didn't

know, didn't know the pathway. So through all of these different modalities of dancing, like how to meditate, studying with good teachers, deeply talking to many close women friends of mine, connecting with my husband, I kind of said to my friend Shelly yesterday, oh, my gosh, I'm -- she's back. It almost brings tears to my eyes, because here she is, she has always been there kind of dormant at some times, at certain times, but now the sunny girl is leading again, and you know, in that sunny girl, she was a powerhouse, that little girl, there's pictures of me standing there like in a swim team picture and I have this hugest ridiculous smile, and I'm doing this kind of like -- it's just pure joy, it looks like a Tazmanian devil joy or something, but it's just ahh, joy! But now she's leading again, and I'm hoping she'll lead the rest of my life because I just love her so much, you know.

So that's something that I think is important and Shelly has got a picture of herself, which is literally the most adorable picture of a child ever, and I look at that and see that girl in my friend Shelly too, I think she's really come fully into that. We were talking about getting older, speaking of getting older, boy am I glad I'm at 64 now

because it just takes a while for these things to marinate sort of back into you and wave back into you and incorporate and integrate. I think obviously we're in such a youth culture, but there's this beauty to it that I think is so not talked about, about getting older. I feel more beautiful even physically at 64 than I ever have, and the culture may not agree with me, but I'm okay with that, you know. It's like I feel it. So if I can help other people feel their inner beauty to their outer beauty or however I can lend a hand there or whatever I learn there and share it, it just feels like this is like my mission in life with things. It's usually with women, just, you know, coming in and having like a body that maybe people, you know, whatever body they were given, the culture, it's not the con scripted body that you have to have. I don't know why I'm trying to use that word, because I can't pronounce it. Me as a dancer, I didn't have the right body type, my mom told me way back when I started to dance, you're not five eight and skinny. I was like, I don't know what I can do about getting taller. I mean, I could go to the surgeon and get my legs lengthened or something, so I think what I had to learn how to do and I was probably 20 pounds more

than I am now when I was dancing, started to dance at 19, your differences make you so wonderful, and if you really exaggerate your differences as I did as a younger dancer to get in the dance world, oh, she's funny, we'll use her for this comic part, oh, she doesn't have the body, we'll use her for this other piece that she'll look really good in that, but I made my way by not being the normal thing. And I think that's really important to say because people always go, they kind of look at me right now and don't know what I'm talking about or whatever, but, you know, it's kind of like those resistances that you have, you know, they polish that diamond of who you are, and it's just a great thing to go at it from a different angle and not think you have to be like everybody else, but really be so, so damn authentic it hurts, then you'll find the joy in that. And people recognize it.

>> KATIE WADE: That is what I was just about to say. I mean, I can't add anything to what you just said, I mean, it is so beautiful what you're describing of getting back to yourself, really loving your body and finding it beautiful, more beautiful. I love this, and I was wondering, you know, when you think about that audience,

your first performance with 40 over 40 and they stood up and they had such a strong response, like something is resonating with them, as you're talking right now, I feel that with myself, like this is speaking to something like deep, right, that we don't talk about when we talk about aging. I'm wondering when the audiences were responding, when you are out in the world and people are responding to you, what do you think it is they're really connecting with? What is resonating so much?

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: There's a rebel part of it, because if you go out there and the culture says, you know, you -- I mean, been as a woman, I have women saying to me, they'll say, oh, it's my birthday. And I'll go oh, my gosh, happy birthday. How old are you? Twenty six, I'm really getting old. And I'll go big, I just have to go big. I say I'm 64. You can't be telling me you're old at 26. So there's that part where people feel like their expiration date as women even if they don't claim it, the culture keeps throwing it at us that you're expired, you're expired. And so I think what I was feeling from that audience, that initial audience to your question is they saw themselves in us, no matter what age they were, that was interesting to

me, and that -- what was the other thing about it? Oh, it's this defiance against the cultural norm, quote, unquote, that people resonate with that. It's like oh, those girls are out there -- girls, women, you know, women over 40 -- they're out there and they're just busting their butts out there dancing and it was very much in the program all these women are 40 or over. You know, I wanted to make the point, rather than try to hide the point, cover it up, no. We are 40 and up. And this is what we do. We demonstrated ourselves rather than preaching to it. We just showed that we were dancers, and we were still dancers, and we had more to give now than we used to have to give when we were younger because we have refinement and experience and we have a sense of humor about ourselves and we're in a tribe basically. You create a tribe. And then people love that tribal aspect of it, in a positive way.

So I think for me, I've said this to you before when we were talking, it's for me to dance still at 64 and be with these women, the other day I was teaching class and I think someone was -- a couple dancers were either 69 or 70, a little bit over 70, I'm sure, but I think so, and I was going for me at this point dancing is an act of defiance.

That is an act of rebellion and defiance for me because how many people are going to go -- and people usually go, oh, are you still dancing? And they ask in a certain way. And I go, yeah! Why wouldn't I be?

You know, it's kind of like, stop saying oh, you're going to get sick because you're 64. Oh, you're going to get -- oh, your bones hurt, your joints. You know, it's like, oh, this football player had to stop because he was 37. And they put an age on everything and try to move us around and manipulate us with these opinions. And I just think it's an act of defiance to go, we don't just talk about it, we do it! And I just think that's very powerful, and it's more powerful as a group, you know. It just is. And we get all that oxytocin going, so we're very full of ourselves.

>> KATIE WADE: I was thinking that when you were describing that, I was like man, those hormone chemicals must be so strong and great.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: Yeah.

>> KATIE WADE: Well, I think this is a good time to shift a little bit on that note. We have a treat for the audience, Nancy is going to lead us in some movement and

some dance, and you have questions, be sure submit them in the Q & A box at the bottom because we'll take a couple minutes at the end for questions for Nancy, but in the meantime create a little space around you in your chair, stand up, and I'll let Nancy take it away.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: Okay, what we're going to do is I decided today because we were having problems kind of figuring out music, Katie and I were, so what I decided to do is I'm going to show what we're going to do, I call it a movement meditation, so anybody can do it. Anybody can do it. We could do it sitting, we could do it standing, but we start out, and I'm just going to back up a little bit, I hope you can see my hands. Can you, Katie, can you see what I'm doing? So I'm starting in the chair position and I'll gently lead you through this, there's no music, I'm just going to guide you through this, I like to start in the prayer position to begin with and close my eyes, I'm closing my eyes just to demonstrate it and starting in the prayer brings hope and energy down into the heart and then I'm going to put my left hand down on my heart and my right hand crossing over that, now I'm sitting up nice and straight as much as you can. If you have any limited

movement just be everything be just within a range you're super comfortable with and we just start out just feeling our heart and taking some nice easy breaths, inhaling and exhaling. You can inhale through your nose. Exhale through your mouth. And feel like the breath is going a little higher. And then deeper on the exhale.

(Pause).

One more.

(Pause).

Inhaling, and exhaling. You can keep your eyes closed or open them up. And now I'm going to show you something that sometimes I like to do is just taking our palms down, and I'm going to take a small circle, coming up with the palms, and then pressing down through the body with the palms down. Now, I take my gaze slightly down. I don't know why it helps me incorporate a little bit more. And you can take with the breath. Inhaling in, and exhaling out. And inhaling in and exhaling out.

Now we're going to get a little bit larger, so we're going to really have our palms out and we're going to dive in through the heart with the hands touching and you notice you might want to wave forward a little bit with the chest.

Inhaling up, exhaling down.

(Inhaling and exhaling).

Inhaling up, exhaling down.

Now we're going to reverse that, we're going to come up like a big sprout coming up and around.

Through the heart up, maybe as high as your forehead, and down.

Inhaling up. Exhaling down.

Inhaling up. I love seeing you guys doing this.

Exhaling down. Let's come back to the heart before we do a couple more things. Just feel that you've got a little tiny bit of a buzz inside the body. I call it happy bees inside the body buzzing.

Now we're just going to take our hands down to our thighs, so just resting them on our legs, and kind of just feel kind of like a little jaunty shake in like the shoulder, just kind of bounce a tiny, tiny bit, and then just gently come back to center. Beautiful. I love the interpreter, he's like rocking it over there.

(laughter).

Then we take the head to the right, a tiny bit of a half circle forward, super-gentle, no feeling like you should do

a big range, just a gentle range, and then again to the right. Forward, and just let the body flow with that, to the center.

And do it again, right, forward, left, and we're just taking it slow because we just want the body to inform us where it is. One more time, forward, left, and then of course we have to go to the left to get the right brain and the left brain going, and right and up. Katie is doing a full on 360 all the way around. I'm just going half circle. But if we want to go to the back, that's fine. And forward and right and find the center.

Now we're going to take our shoulders up to the ears, back down. Now we're taking a shoulder roll. Now, if you like jazz music or jazz dance, this is a very jazzy move, which would have some funk music going to it if we had it, but we can add in that later when we're alone, like this. And one more going to the back. Yeah. And then forward up, shoulders forward, roll them back and down, scapula down, up, just make sure you're still breathing. Forward. Around. One more time. Up and around. Now with the shoulders we're going to take a little shimmy, you can let the hands be loose, and if you're really awake and you've

had your coffee or your tea, you can go a little bit to the right and a little bit to the left and a little bit to the right and a little bit to the left, and then if you're really jazzy, you go down, and then you go up, and then you go down, and then you go up. And we're going to take our hands and just shake them out like this. Shake them, shake them, shake them, shake them, and kind of be wonky with them and just be whacky so the body is just doing what it's doing. Then go way up, shake them out, come way down. Now you like jazz hands just for fun to know that you did them, jazz hands, spreading the fingers wide and press them like you're pressing on a wall, and you can come in and make a fist, and jazz hands, press them out.

(Laughing). Doing this face that's very jazzy that goes like this, a note of surprise. Jazz hands. Let them go, maybe arms get a little bigger. Look at how your head wants to go, la, la, la, that's fun. Just shake it out, shake it, shake it, shake it down. Now we're just going to go a little bit, kind of like a little rhythm, we're going to go right, left, right, left, right, left, right, left, shoulders go up, down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up, down and a jazz, down, down, down with those hands.

Approximate (Laughing).

I love it. You go right, right, go left, left, go right, right, go left, left, shake it down.

Do that one more time. And right, right and left, left, and right, right, and left, left, and shake it down, like rain coming down.

And then we weirdly go back to the heart, because that was just fun, that's all we're going to do. Does that feel like enough, Katie? Good. Back to the heart, and then just let's close our eyes again, and just feel the community, the whole community just jazzing it up this morning, and just feeling the heart and how we're in this large community, and just sending a big wave of gratitude to everybody for being able to share anything and all with you today and wishing our whole community well here. Is and now just float our eyes open, hands relaxed and just come back. Things feel a little bit more awake, feel that.

>> KATIE WADE: I loved that, if you could tell.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: I'm flying you out next week.

>> KATIE WADE: That was so lovely.

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: And the interpreter too is coming.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, that was great. Nancy, I want

to end, we have one question from the audience that I think would be good to move on before we move on to our next speaker. Lynn wants to know, what is your best anecdote to self-doubt?

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: Oh, my gosh, I love that question.

(Pause) wow. I've had so much doubt in my life. As we all have. And insecurity. When I doubt, I try to not react. I would say one of the things for me is not reacting right away to that doubt or acting on doubt, to not act with doubt. But to go take my own counsel: Is it true what I'm feeling? Is it proven out? And I go inside there. I think that I have almost stopped dancing many times from doubt, would be a good thing to say there, because, you know, maybe I had an injury, is that going to take me out, recently I had a hip replacement. There are so many things that are placed in my body, we can't even go into that, that's a whole another hour, but the latest one was the hip replacement. And I thought, is this going to take me down, every time I've had a bad injury, is this going to take me down? Do I stop dancing now? Or am I not popular anymore, do I stop dancing because of that? Classes are down. Because in life, a long life, there are

hills and valleys where you don't have hardly any people and then it's packed and then you don't hardly have any people and then it's packed again, or I changed something, so now I'm going to experiment with something new. I had this one therapist in my 9,257 years of therapy that said, you know, when in doubt, don't stay. If you have an opportunity to leap at something new, always leap, even if it feels like you're going across a big divide and you're going from one little platform to another, always leap. And I hear her voice in my head constantly. I had this therapist when I was very young. So I will go through the doubt, and then I think if I died and didn't try that or if I died and didn't say that or make that, I would feel terrible. And so I'm always going to, what am I here for? What's my fullest expression of being? And if I'm not doing that, you know, I'm not attending to something magnificent that is trying to meet me there. So that's such a good question, it's still flummoxing me even though I'm kind of answering it. I just have gone through it and go into the strongest vibration I can in the universe and try to become one with that vibration and take it from there and love myself through the doubt, you know. Love

myself through it, because I'm a Virgo, so we don't think we should ever do anything quote, unquote, wrong. We think so many things are wrong, we have to really learn to let everything be messy and wrong and weird, you know. So I just try to incorporate the doubt into the messiness and beauty of life, I think.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Nancy, that is great. For folks who want to find more of Nancy, I know you do, there's some amazing videos and you can read about her upcoming shows at [One Big Yes Productions.com](http://OneBigYesProductions.com), right?

>> NANCY CRANBOURNE: Thank you, Katie.

### **Creative Moment: Albertina Padilla**

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Nancy, have a good one. Next up I would like to introduce a creative moment, here I have with me Albertina Padilla, and I want to tell you just a little bit about Albertina before we get started. So Albertina is a storyteller and a co-founder and story curator of [MiHistoria.net](http://MiHistoria.net) and facilitator of storytelling workshops. Albertina was born to a farm worker family in Monterrey, California, was a classroom teacher for over 20 years and has served in a variety of community roles, shop steward and union representative, soccer coach, mentor for

the National Latina Health Organization, board member of Clinica de la Raza and a member of the teacher advisory board of the Oakland museum of California and Luna Dance Institute. So Albertina works with individuals and groups, helping them find the key to unlock their stories, and thus, their passage to shaping the world around them. So she's going to share a story and then we'll have some tips, so I will let you take it away.

>> ALBERTINA PADILLA: Thanks. Good morning, everyone. How Officer one this morning? We have an interpreter also? That is amazing. I love that. (Speaking Spanish).

So I am here to share a story with you about reinvention and also some ideas around what to do and how to move your stories forward because everyone has a story to share and everyone's story is important and everybody has that gift. Storytelling is the oldest art form, and it's accessible to everyone. We just oftentimes don't hear everyone's story, it's not a part of the mainstream, and what I work on is to bring forward the stories of people who you may not have heard from in the mainstream before, farm worker women, for instance, we've worked with Empasinas to share the stories of farm worker women, bring a cadre of farm worker women to

San Francisco and they shared stories that they were interested in letting people know about that they work around, pesticides, labor conditions, immigration, domestic violence, so not your typical stories that you might hear in the media, but stories that have a place. So this story of reinvention that I would like to share is a story of what happened to me when I left teaching.

When I left teaching, I actually was pushed out of my classroom. It was at a point in time where budgets were real important and there wasn't a whole lot of money, and so I was the highest paid teacher in my classroom, and so from one day to the next, I was out of my classroom. I knew myself enough to know that there were certain things I needed in my life. I needed to exercise, so I began on exercise a lot more. I began to walk. I knew that I needed to be in an organization that was large so that it didn't -- the focus wasn't just on me but that the focus went outward, that I needed to be of service to others, and so I began to look around my community to see where there was a need for me to volunteer and to take that focus off of me, so I goon volunteer and exercise and I met a filmmaker who asked me to join her on her project, so I had

the opportunity to work on a film and from the film we developed the MiHistoria website, which I welcome you all to come and see, put it on your computer, on your telephone, it's both in -- it's both in English and in Spanish, I invite you to read the stories, to look at the photographs that we share, and to upload your own if you are so inclined. Now, when I left my classroom, the following day, I went and got a pedicure, my toenails are super-ugly, so I needed to take care of myself. So I was on the phone with a colleague and she called me and said, is it true that you've left? And yes. What are you going to do? It's like, well, land on my two feet, of course. I remembered a story that my father had told me, he came to this country as a vacero in the 1940s and his story was of being put on a bus to be taken on Arizona and to uproot himself from the valley and go to a state he had no interest in being in and he said Mija, my daughter, I don't want to go to Arizona. I didn't sign up to go to Arizona. He says he tried to tell everyone on the bus to get off, and no one got off. He got off with just a blanket and went and slept under an overpass and began all over again by knocking on doors.

So when I left, that was the story that I heard in my head, and I'm thinking to myself, well, here I am born in this country, I have a roof over my head, I have a family that supports me, I can do this. I will land on my two feet. Of course I will! There's nothing I can't do. If my father could do this with a blanket and I have an education, a family and a roof over my head and food on my table, there's nothing I can't do.

So one foot in front of the other and starting anew. I think it's real important for us to develop a sense of optimism and to have a sense of humor, that resilient people face difficult situations realistically yet find ways to be optimistic. I found a way to be optimistic when I left my identity as a teacher by exercising, by giving of myself to others and by doing some creative endeavors in the film making world, which I had never done before, and through the website. I was a neophyte it, and more than anything I didn't know the first thing about developing a website, but it was done. And in terrible times, it's real important to find meaning and purpose, no matter what's going on. You can choose your attitude and show leadership by setting an example for others. In the course of that

reinvention process, I heard from all kinds of friends who said, whoa, you did this? How did you do this? And it's the attitude that we take. It's experiencing something new, encountering and helping others in the process.

Another tip I would suggest is to reframe your perspective. Focus on what is truly in your power to control. In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity, and finding opportunity takes imagination and the ability to reframe your perspectives. So develop a sense of optimism, find meaning and purpose, and reframe your perspective. And then express yourself creatively. All of us can rediscover a lost skill. I look back on the people that I grew up with. I see a friend of my father who was a chip carver. I see seamstresses. My mother would come home from 16-hour days and work on creating clothing for others. I see people being resourceful with what they had around them. So express yourself creatively. (Speaking Spanish).

Our culture cures us. Creative expression has the power to heal emotions and to nurture our soul. When you create, you shift your field of attention. It becomes something that is life-affirming and that generates even more of a

process forward. Then improvise. Be bold. Resilient people are masters of resourcefulness and innovation. It gives you the capacity to improvise and create and problem solve using the materials that you have available around you. And again, what I used was what I had available. Sometimes it takes a little bit of output to begin to create things, and if you don't have the resources to do that with, then you use what you have. You fall back on the most basic. I fell back on storytelling, and that is what I have always loved. When my mother worked 16-hour days as a housekeeper, there was a house on the estate that she cleaned, and my father was the handyman at, and that house had a library in the child's bedroom of the family that lived there. He was away for most of the time at boarding school. So his library was open, and when I was a child, I have to confess that I did something that was sort of irreverent, I did not know English at that point, so I figured that the best thing I needed to do was to read and to check out his library, and so when no one was around, I went into his room and I would take them, I would take them and sit under a tree and I would read those books, and from those books I learned so much, not just about language, not

just about English, but about the world, about places I had not visited and still haven't, but I think that because of what I did in taking those books, I learned about stories also, and I learned that stories are important, and I think that is a part of the reason why I became a storyteller, because if we go back far enough, we'll find that thread that comes through our lives and we just need to pick up on it and move forward.

>> KATIE WADE: Oh, my goodness. Are you all as stunned as I am? Thank you, Albertina, that was so good. If we could just take a minute for you to tell us, embedded in those lovely stories were very concrete tips for creativity or resiliency that were just amazing. I was furiously taking notes. Could you say them quickly for us again?

>> ALBERTINA PADILLA: Sure. To develop a sense of optimism and humor. To find meaning and purpose. There's a quote from my college: Remember who you are and what that represents. That always sticks in my mind. You know who you are. My father would always used to tell me that when I was young, Mija, there's a string inside of you. Pull it from the top of your head and straighten it, and it is your essence, who you are. When that essence is

straight, you know who you are, you know what you are worth, you know what your value is. Find it, remember it, pull it, make it strong.

>> KATIE WADE: My goodness, so good. And I think we'll put some of those tips up on the creative aging symposium website as well. So thank you so much for your time today, Albertina, we'll move on to our next speaker. We sure appreciate that. All right.

### **Speaker: Debra Rapoport**

So next up we have Debra and Julie is, I would like to welcome both of you. Julie is my co-host today, Julie Pfitzinger, you heard me mention her. Huge shout out, journalist for life strong across living and technology channels, since 2017, her work as a strong focus on the arts, her journalism career has included feature writing for the Star Tribune as well as local lifestyle publications all in the Twin Cities area in Minneapolis area and she's also served as managing editor for nine local community Lifestyle magazines, so she'll be interviewing Debra and I'll let her introduce Debra. Welcome. And.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Can you see me, am I hear?

>> Hi, Julie, good to see you.

>> Good to see you too. Good to see you. I love your hat, I love your necklaces, so I'm glad we're going to be talking about creativity today, right?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Thank you. Yes.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Great. Well, first of all, I would like to introduce Debra to the audience to let them know that she is an eco-friendly style icon who lives in New York City, fashion is Debra's favorite expressing of creativity and she believes that style is healing and where there is creativity there are no rules, and and where there are no rules, there is no fear. We'll talk about that in a couple nip knits. Deborah's art revolves around creating textiles related to the body, headgear as you can see this morning and other things such like that. Her emphasis for more than 50 years has been on recycling and repurposing pieces of clothing, art, they've been shown all over the world. Debra has her MA from the University of California Berkeley, she's taught at UC Davis, NYU, the metropolitan museum of art, the museum of arts and design and other formidable places. Debra is an Instagram influencer, so if you're on Instagram, I encourage you to follow her because

she's great. She has 33,000 followers already so she's very popular on Instagram. She's also an ambassador for the worldwide advanced style movement. So Debra has a lot going on, and Debra, I'm excited to talk to you today. So let's start with that statement where there is no -- where there is creativity, there are no rules. Where there are no rules, there is no fear. Tell us what that means to you.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Well, I think we all know early on if you took an art class you were told how to draw a tree, how to draw a figure, and it was totally intimidating. So you said, you know, I can't draw a straight line, that old quote, but the reality is we're all creative and we come at it in a personal way and nobody can tell us what's right. So that's why I say there are no rules. Therefore, we can move ahead and be fearless because it shouldn't be any judgment. You're not doing brain surgery. If you're doing brain surgery, that's a whole other thing. When you're being creative, I don't care if you're painting, gardening, cooking, walking a log, taking care of a child, painting a masterpiece or creating an embellishment for the body, it's your statement. So that's yours.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: One of my favorite quotes, I'll put it out now so I don't forget, Maya Angelou, if you're always trying to be normal, you'll never know how amazing you truly are.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Wow, that's truly beautiful, isn't it?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: So profound because we're all trying to fit in some category that we see in a magazine or we see on TV. Forget about it. We're never going to live up to that so why bother.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right. So be yourself, be whoever that is, right?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Right. Like Oscar Wilde says, be yourself, everyone else is taken. Now I'm finished with my quotes.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Those are both great ones, I love that. So let's talk a little bit about fashion and style and you say that getting dressed is an art of play and I love how playful you are today, you look just gorgeous. So tell us, every morning you go in front of your closet, how do you choose to wear?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: I see it as a morning meditation, it's a time I'm just quiet with myself and I tune in and I say who am I today? Yeah, it's the weather, it's the activities, it's your mood, but it's first about your inner knowing. And then you know, I'm 74 years old, I've been doing this since I was three or maybe earlier, it becomes intuitive of what's going to feel right on my body? Both as a feeling and both as kind of a look that I'm going to be comfortable with. It's not so much of what I want the world to see. It's first about me and because that's what I have to project. If I project that with honesty, then out there people are going to give me a smile and say hey, what a great hat or let's have a conversation, and I kind of use it as a friendship tool.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: And living in New York of course people stop you and talk to you all the time.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right. So if somebody watching this morning thinks, oh, I just go to the same sweater every day, I go to the same pair of pants every day or whatever, how could they approach their closet, you know, have that sense of play if this is something that they are

not used to doing? What would be a couple tips that you would share?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: The first thing I say that's practical is curate your closet. Don't go shopping and say I need another blah blah. Go to your closet, rearrange it, find things that you haven't worn in a while. We all have things that move to the back that we forget about, so do that. And I often say, put away the denim, put away the black, and go for the color, the texture, the print, and start to play. And if you used -- and if you are used to wearing one scarf, try wearing two, see what it feels like. Again, you're not doing any harm. If two scarves seem to be too much, then you'll take one off. But it's an act of play. Have a good time.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Yeah.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: We live in such a serious world that if we don't do something as getting dressed and making it a playful act, then we're going to start out with all this sadness. I mean, I wake up every day having to listen to the news and I say I can't take it anymore. What am I going to do? What kind of creative act? So I'll either sit down and make something out of an egg crate or a paper

bag that's sitting in the garbage because that's what I work with, and then I'll also get dressed and decide, you know, what am I going to put on myself as self-expression, because I do feel that style is healing. Not fashion, not consumption. Not trends. Your own personal style. That that can heal us because that's when we get very close to who we truly are and that's what matters.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Everyone has style, so everyone has their own style.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Right. Just like everyone has creativity. Like my one friend who was possibly going to be on here and maybe another time, Sheila Weinstein, she wrote a book moving to the center of the bed after her husband passed away, how to enrich your life again, and people in her audience will often say but I'm not creative, I don't paint, I don't draw, and she'll say, can you make a sandwich? Making a sandwich is a creative act, taste, color, texture accident you're assembling it in the manner in which you want, come on, that's important.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right. And that's great and that's something that everybody can do or make a batch of cookies, get into it, use your hands, right? Exactly. And that's a

creative moment. Sometimes people for -- do you think sometimes people forget what a creative moment actually can be? Right?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Absolutely. Absolutely.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Yeah.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: We used to make candles, we used to sew. Now there are so many mending groups and fixing groups because as we have to save the planet and become more sustainable, we're reusing and repurposing, so things have to be brought back. Our grandmothers did it all the time.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: They mended, they repurposed, they made their children's suits out of their husband's suit, we have to get back to that and it's fun. In a way it is dire need because we have to save the planet, but make it a creative fun act.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right. Right. And that's something I know we talked about too the other day that you are very passionate about the swap shop concept, so what can you tell everybody about that, because that's something that people can do with they love, with their friends, with

people they haven't met yet. Let's talk about that. What does that mean?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Any of us can set it up, I'll set it up, other time it's in a bigger venue, it's easy now, e-mail, post it on Instagram, and people just think things they no longer want, usually up to like ten items, let's say, we put it out on a table, there's food and drink, you meet people, whether they're my age or they're younger and it becomes a wonderful social event and you pass on things that you no longer want and you take home a few items without having spent a penny, and it doesn't go in the landfill. Whatever doesn't get swapped at that then it goes to a thrift shop. And it's really fun, and I say Mr. Macy's does not need my money and I don't need another navy blue suit with brass buttons or something. It's more fun to go to the swap meet when you don't know what's going to be there.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: And like you mentioned.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: The fun is in the search.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: In the search and getting to meet people of all ages as well because you've mentioned it, running into friends if are much -- yeah?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: It's a social gathering.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That's right. Exactly. And you can meet people of all ages that you wouldn't meet otherwise, correct?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Yeah. Exactly.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That's great.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Like this coming weekend at brine Park which is a very big park in New York, eye Larry with an ice skating rink, so it's called swap and skate so people are bringing things early and then swap meet will be between 1 and 3 and they're encouraging you to come with family and whatever and use the skating rink as well. It's a brilliant idea.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Oh, that's great. That's great. Well, and the other thing too, apart from the swap shop concept, I know that walking around in New York, you've looked for things, you find little bits of whatever, tell us, like what's a day for you? What's a morning for you? Go outside and you're inspired by what? How do you start?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: First I'm inspired by the weather and the light. New York can be dark and gray, but if it's sunny and bright. And I'm always just walking looking for

things that someone might have thrown away that I can repurpose. You know, I will often have projects that have been started, whether it's hat making or if I'm about to teach, I have to prepare the elements for that or I have to gather them up, you know, I'm about to go to Greece next week, I have a big exhibition at Laluna's jewelry museum and I'm also going to teach there, and I mostly make hats out of paper towels. So to have the class go smoothly, I have to at least prepare two or three of the elements for the students just so that they have something to work with and then they can learn how to fold and glue the elements. So I have to do that. I have to pack for that and get ready for teaching. So that's often a big part of my life. Also interviews like this, speaking engagements, so I have to figure out what am I going on wear that I can illustrate to people that like my necklace is just made from twisted masking tape, when I'm bored and I need some kind of a meditation, one of the things I'll do is just twist tape, it quiets my mind, I sit in silence or I listen to music, and that's what the creative process is about, especially if it's hands on. It's a time to be quiet, to take your mind off the world and just go inside and be with yourself

and be with your truth. And it doesn't matter what it is. Twisting tape is about as low tech and as kooky as you can get and I love it and I've been doing that for the last 65 years that appear to be ridiculous but that's my art form.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That's interesting that you mention music because I was thinking you seem like somebody that would maybe listen to music as you're crafting, as you're creating. So maybe tell us a little bit like what kind of music do you enjoy listening to when you're at work on a project, if you want a little bit of atmosphere rather than just being -- just thinking?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: It can be classical, of course I love cello.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Do you?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: I love all the folk songs and the rock & roll songs whatever from the 60s and 70s, my era, the Beatles, all of that. So it just depends on the mood or what the activity is that I'm doing. You know, if you're cooking then sometimes you want something a little upbeat. If you're sitting there twisting tape then you may want something very mellow. So, you know, just background that kind of carries me along.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Yeah, I like that. That's great. So, you know, also thinking of how that sparks some creativity and just sort of wondering, just in general, you find joy in what you're doing in your art and in your connections with people, and if there are people who maybe aren't out and about as much as as they would like to be, how do you find joy and the spark of creativity just where you are every day?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Well, you know, we all have things around the house that we love, so we can rearrange them, whether it's the pillows or candle sticks on your shelf or buying different color candles, or again, with your clothing, rearrange your clothing, you know, take things out of the closet and what might be your sweater drawer, make that your pants drawer or something, just so you have your hands on that stuff and you're re-creating the way that it's organized. And then just use things around the house, like a lot of what I make are just made from toilet paper rolls, this is made from the espresso pods, I do a lot with the aluminum espresso pods, and I do a lot of workshops using the toilet paper rolls, covering it with labels, postcards, anything, paper is very difficult for me

to throw away. So I collect a lot of paper, and I repurpose it into wearables, and a lot of that stuff is in museums all over the world, as mundane and as low tech as it is, and that's kind of becoming a new trend now. I started it in the late 60s. I have three pieces at the Philadelphia Museum now in a show that opened last month called Off the Wall, American art to wear. And the major piece that when you first walk in is a piece I constructed out of rope and old videotape that I got from the local television station and it's crocheted and it's a wearable piece, it's body size, and it's the first piece that you see when you enter the show.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Oh, wow.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Another piece is one I made more recently about five years ago and it's made from label from the tea, steel wool, chocolate wrappers, and big shoulder things, almost like wings, and then a headpiece that goes with it. And again, it's just all repurposed. Otherwise, it's stuff that would just go in the garbage. To me, it's so beautiful.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Well, it sounds gorgeous. So you have all these items, and I just have kind of a process

question. So the tea bags, chocolate wrappers, and you look at them, and then how did you decide what they would become? Was it just a vision you have in your mind, or you think about it for several days and just kind of -- what is the process of that? That's fascinating to me.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: When I'm walking down the street and I see something in the street, we kind of have a relationship. It speaks to me and it says: Don't, don't pass me by, let's be friends. So I am always acquiring things, and then I allow it to speak to me, and it says do me. I mean, that's how I started with the paper towel hats, the roll of paper towel was a particular kind that has no texture but very cloth-like, and one day it just said, okay, pick me up and do something with me. So intuitively that's what happens with me. I make friends with all that stuff. So it's not even an intellectual process or a difficult process, it's just a matter of being quiet, being with it, holding it, caressing it, and seeing what comes out of it. Because it really is a relationship process.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: What you're describing are the simplest of things that anybody can have with them or find

or whatever, you know.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Totally.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That's fascinating. So making art for you, it's not a very -- it's not a big expense, it's not -- I mean, it's just simple things that need another life and you give them another life.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Right. Right. Like to me, it's too easy to go buy a yard of silk and try to make something pretty, and I'm not about pretty. I like unusual and unique, and so to me, even when I was in graduate school working with these materials, yeah, part of it was saving money at the time, but it was more that these are the things that spoke to me. I don't know where that comes from, but that's who I am, so that's what I do. I honor that because rather than try to be something I'm not, this is who I am.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right. Oh, I love that. That's great. So let me see, I was just thinking, maybe tell us a little bit about Greece, because I know like you mentioned you are going there next week. Is this a new trip?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: I've been there before, not for like 50 years.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: You'll be teaching there and you have an exhibit there, is that correct?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Yes, it's at a fabulous jewelry museum that started out LaLunas was a really fine jeweler working in gold and gems and with the hellenistic background and Byzantine and in 1972 the museum was established and his four daughters one of them is director, they teach traditional jewelry but have also gotten into craft jewelry. A couple years ago I donated a piece because as you get older you want to unload your art and then the director was in New York because every year we have something called New York Jewelry Week, and she came over and said how about if we do a show next winter? So I said fine. She was here in November. She took three suitcases back with all kinds of stuff. And then since I do a lot of -- I get a lot of photographs done of me in my attire, they've installed like 40 large photographs with the pieces. So it's really beautiful, so you just don't see a neck piece sitting on a pedestal or something, but you see it on me in action with other elements. So it's going to be really beautiful and really fun. She's sending me videos every morning as they keep installing.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Oh, what an exciting project. Oh, my gosh, this is going to be great. So people following you on Instagram, I imagine you'll be posting when you're there, is that right?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Yeah. I've started to post, getting people -- because when you're on Instagram, people say well I live in Athens, can I come? I say yes I checked with the museum and they said all you have to do is call or send them your e-mail address so that they can send you an invitation and then people want to come to the workshop now that they hear about that, that will be on Saturday, the 15th of February and the show opens on the 12th of February.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Great.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: And we'll be making hats like I have on out of paper towels.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Then if people in your area in the New York area find your website, learn about workshops and things that you have as well, correct?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Yes. Yes.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Good. So Katie, I should ask you, do we have any questions for Debra?

>> KATIE WADE: We have a couple of comments about how amazing Debra's outfit is. Someone said they are living for your glasses, Debra.

(laughter).

>> KATIE WADE: And we had an ask for a close-up of the bracelet and then what you did of course and Debra is there anything else about your outfit we haven't already touched on?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Well, it's all gifted and thrifted, everything is either from a thrift shop or a swap meet, the hat, actually the glasses were given to me too because I did a hat thing at CI Wear. Even the rings were gifted.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Oh, wow.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: No, this one I actually bought in Spain because I had another silver ring that I liked and I gave it away to a young friend and then I came across this one made by a Spanish artist and it's just wire, so of course I love it because it's very low tech. And this one actually, can you see that, was my mother's, she bought it in the early 60s in Mexico, and I just love it.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Oh, that's gorgeous.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Because it has like a cocoon inside

that's either made from clay or stone.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That's beautiful.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: The necklace, as I told you, oh, this necklace is made from old springs, springs that I've been carrying around for probably 30 years, and then I just bound it with paper towels and a little bit of copper paint. So I can wear it either way, I can wear it with the blue and copper showing if I want a little more color or I wear it with just the silver springs dangling. Again, and it's all junk. Precious to me, but the inherent value is nothing.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right. Again, like so simple and anybody could be sitting at home right now, look around and see what speaks to you, develop a relationship like you were saying earlier. What speaks to you?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: One philosophy that I like to live by is the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, which is everything in our life is one or two or three or all of these things, everything is impermanent, everything is incomplete, and everything is imperfect, and with all of that, everything is the way it should be, and if we can embrace that, then talk about resilience, then we're not

always fighting against. I say don't resist resilience, just go, think of a reed that is really strong but has the ability to move in the wind, so it's anchored, very grounded, but at the same time on planet earth we have to be able to move with change because change is the only thing that's constant as much as we love as human beings we love rigidity, we love repetition, we love habit, hardest thing is change, I know, because I'm a Cancererian, I love to be home, I hate to leave home, but we sometimes have to be a little more flexible and go with the breeze.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Especially as we get older, things change, things happen you don't expect and just be -- I like the image of the reed because I think that's really beautiful but just be able to bend.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Yes.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: And things just make the best of what things are and make your way forward, right?

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Well, Gabby Bernstein who has a website and book about the universe has your back, that was actually her vision that I took yesterday in reading her site about the reed and it resonated with me, working with basketry materials, if the reed is strong and flexible.

>> KATIE WADE: A question from the audience, Debra, tell us a little bit where did this start? You have a good childhood story about your creativity.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Oh, yeah. Thank you for reminding me. Well, I had wonderful grandparents, particularly my mother's side, my sister and I would go there often, you know, grandma would cook for us, things we love, and we would always go to the old-fashioned sewing machine ask take out the button drawer, then we would take it to the living room and dump on the floor and start playing, and my grandfather would say oy, oy, they're making a mess. And my grandmother would say, be quiet, they're being creative. So that runs through me. So there's no such thing as a mess, it's part of the creative process, and you can't take that away. And I've found through all my education, that education seemed about intimidation, this isn't good enough, this isn't the way you do that, you know, they would take a drawing off the wall and step on it to make you whatever. And when I finally got to graduate school at UC Berkeley, there was so much positivity and so much support that for the first time I realized that education wasn't about intimidation, it was about encouragement and

being supported. And that's finally at 22 where I got my courage to be who I was, I was always trying to figure out oh, this isn't right, I'm supposed to be this way, an undergraduate, you kind of look at the ones who are excelling and you always put yourself down, it's kind of like what Nancy was saying before the dancer about how much baggage we carry and as we get older we get so much more trusting and we say who cares? Because I am who I am and I love myself for it. Look, I got here, I'm I'm surviving, I love my life, so I'm not like everybody else. I don't want to be normal. I don't want to be like everyone else. Not if I could be happy being myself. And that's I think that's the bottom line.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That is absolutely the bottom line. That's great. That's wonderful.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah, thank you so much for that, Debra, it's such a nice note to think about and really builds upon Nancy's message as well. Thank you both to Julie and Debra, I appreciate your time and sharing all that energy and talent with us. So I will let you scamper off to the wild world of New York, Debra.

>> DEBRA RAPOPORT: Thank you.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you. And to our audience, we're going to take a short break. I would like to first thank Kaiser Permanente, our advocate level sponsor for this really wonderful morning, we'll be back at 10:45 Pacific time so that's about 12 minutes, so we'll see you soon.

(Break until 10:45).

>> KATIE WADE: We're taking a break for a minute. We'll be back in about seven minutes.

For those just joining us, we're taking a quick break, we'll be starting in one to two minutes with our next speaker.

### **Creative Moment: Edythe Boone**

>> KATIE WADE: All right, folks, just bear with us a moment as we get our speaker on board, we'll get started soon.

All right, Edythe, can you hear me?

>> EDYTH BOONE: I can hear you.

>> KATIE WADE: Welcome.

>> EDYTH BOONE: Thank you.

>> KATIE WADE: We have quite a few people who are joining us today and for both of you joining, we're having a little bit of a technical difficulty, so you won't see

Edy's face, sorry to say, but we will certainly hear her voice today. So I want to welcome Edie, thanks for being with us. Edie, Edythe Boone is a self-taught artist and an activist, she works as a muralist, a counselor, an art educator, and she's spent decades using art as a tool for community transformation, bringing diverse individuals and communities together in fostering change through empathy. Whether collaborating on a mural as large and epic as the Maestrapeace building, all the way down to teaching young women, art's message is clear, that it's healing power is for everyone. I'm so impressed by the work you have done and I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about, I stopped by the mural we just spoke of, Maestrapeace this past week and it's so good, and it's beautiful representation of how like visual expression can really be a powerful medium for spreading seeds of change in a community and I think that's at the heart of a lot of your work and I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that, how your art and activism connect to each other.

>> EDYTH BOONE: Usually -- hello, everybody on the panel, I just wanted to stay hem low to everybody -- just wanted to say hello to everybody. Usually when I go into

the community, I really do try to get to know the community because I know I'm going to be there for a little while and I can't put what I believe should be on the wall because it's their wall, so I try and go and get what they're really saying. So I interview. So usually I have a lot of meetings with people, and I feed them good, I try to feed them good. If I have a grant, I try and go have good food for them so they can feel comfortable and bring their kids and just really make it comfortable for all ages. And talk to them about what do they see should be on the wall and what the theme should be, what's going on in your neighborhood, and once they start talking, it's just wonderful, people just open up and that's how I bring a beautiful mural to a community, and I make many friends, you know, of this community, that's what's so beautiful about it, you meet people and then you learn to care about them and you see that there are all kinds of people, there are foot soldiers, people who clean their community, every community that ever went in, somebody was cleaning it. Some person, whether it was a male or a female, was picking up the dirt in the community and they lived in the community, almost every mural, there was a person like

that, I call them foot soldiers, they're on the ground, they know what's going on in the community.

>> EDYTH BOONE: I think I've said enough.

>> KATIE WADE: I love what you're saying, it seems like this is a novel community, but asking the community what's going on for them, what do they want addressed, acknowledging the position of a foot soldier, these aren't things that always happen when decisions are made in our society, so this is realm unique -- so this is really unique. Yeah.

I wonder with the mural on the women's building specifically, what was that process like? Were you gathering people and talking in the community?

>> EDYTH BOONE: Oh, yes, we send out thousands and thousands of fliers and had many meetings and knocked on many doors because we wanted to get it right and we want to do represent every woman in the world. You November on the women's building there's only one male there and he's wearing the 49, that was my son that I adopted when he was 15 months old and he was in two homes and he was abused in both of those homes and he turned out to be such a wonderful young man, he passed away three years ago, but he

was such a beautiful young man that I'm so glad that he's on that mural. Also since we are talking about the mural, I just want to say one thing, that there's a new book about the mural and it's called Maestrapeace, M-A-E-S-T-R-A-P-E-A-C-E. And it's such a beautiful book and you can buy it at Costco and it's a big book, you would want to keep it on your coffee table, Costco is selling it now, it's really a beautiful book, so check it out.

>> KATIE WADE: Edie you're the highlighted person in a documentary.

>> EDYTH BOONE: Yes, I am.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah, tell us a little bit about that process.

>> EDYTH BOONE: Well, I met this woman, her name was Mo Mars and I had her daughter who works with me now, she's an artist, and she came to me one day and asked me could she do a documentary about me. I said no. I'm not interested in that. (Chuckling) and she kept after me and kept after me, and I thought about it, and I said, well, I can put a twist on this and help young people and help old people, you know. That's what I felt. So I felt that if I can help young people and do a mural with young people and it's

videotaped and if I did a mural with old people and it was videotaped, that it would help other young people and other old people who would see this video. So it became a hit. I mean, it's called: A New Color. Anybody who hears that thinks that I'm trying to go and change somebody's color or something like that, but no, I was always looking to go and make a new color, and I'm still doing that, you know. I figured I was going to make a lot of money if I made a new color that nobody else did, and I'm still trying.

(laughter).

>> KATIE WADE: I love that. Well, and it's poetic too, the idea of a new color and what you do in your community work, the newness that you bring through art, there's a lot of parallel there, I think.

>> EDYTH BOONE: Yeah.

>> KATIE WADE: I wonder your thoughts on, you know, as an outsider walking past let's say a mural in the community, of course you might stop and look at how beautiful it is, you might take in some of its message, you know, what do you hear from people that are seeing your work out in the community? How does that create resiliency or change in the community?

>> EDYTH BOONE: Well, I just finished a mural on Ashby and Ellis right across the street from the senior building in Berkeley and the mural was the history of south Berkeley. So I live close, I live in south Berkeley, and I know the community. So when I first came, I didn't know all the people in the community, so what I did was I started getting to know some of the people in the community, and I also joined an activist group which is called Friends of Adamheim (Sounds like) we meet every other Monday and try bring change, it was 40 percent black, and now it's only 6 percent and that was very painful to a lot of people because people were pushed out of their houses for not good reasons. So the first thing that I did was I went and did, the first year I did research, and I got a grant, I think it was \$3,000, and I did research. I went to the library, I went to the -- I just went places, I talked to people and I just got all this information about Rumford and different people who were heroes, because people, the Japanese internment, it started from the American Indians and then it showed the Japanese internment how they were pushed out and then it goes to the African Americans and now that they're pushed out, but, you know,

it's done with such dignity because what happens is that when you go to certain cities, they have certain areas that black people can live and they call it redlining, and that's what happened, that's how all those people, a lot of heroes and sheroes, Mildred Howard, her daughter is a famous artist, art and museum, she was pushed out because they kept raising the rent, so she had a studio and she was born there. And her mother was responsible, Mabel Howard was responsible for the black train going under and still they're riding on top, the L, so she fought with that, and she fought with tough nails and stuff, her story is powerful, they have a documentary about her story and how she fought the people and got that train to go underground because she felt like it would separate the other part of district 3, we're in district 3. So if you put the L up, it would have just, you know, over the track, you know what I'm talking about.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah.

>> EDYTH BOONE: So she fought for that. So now there's a section here where all the heroes who are not here anymore, I want to put flames on about them and bring them back to life and teach people about what's happened. There

was a man that used to wave every single morning,  
Mr. Jarles, everybody recognizes him in Berkeley, he's big  
as life on that mural. So it was a wonderful experience,  
but each mural I do, I just have a lot of joy in bringing  
it to people.

>> KATIE WADE: I'm hearing so many good elements, like  
the idea that you start by really investing in the  
community, spending time there, hearing the stories,  
hearing what matters to people, and then you have this  
visual, huge visual representation and colorful of those  
stories that may be lost, you know, if not for this way of  
amplifying them. So there's this visual in the community  
of those stories that are really important, and then  
there's this piece of that there are issues that need to be  
addressed, community issues embedded in that, and it raises  
some awareness, right, of those issues.

>> EDYTH BOONE: It definitely does. Well, through that  
mural a group formed called the friends of Ediline, it was  
forming before I started, people were meeting and then I  
joined it. So it's really diverse, and so, you know, we  
are fighting for the homeless people, the underdog, the  
people who don't have anything, you know, why are they

building all these expensive buildings where people move in and nobody can move in -- and why are they -- why aren't they actually making buildings for homeless people and low-income people.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah, your passion, it's so evident in the work, right? You can see it sprayed all out in the color, in the visuals, and I think that's perhaps what resonates so much with people. I mean, you know, I've seen your work, and it stopped me in my tracks, right? To stop and look at that. Yeah. It's really impactful. I wonder if you might just take a minute here at the end to think of our audience, people here are wanting to have an impact in their community in some creative way. Like what's your biggest tip for doing that kind of work?

>> EDYTH BOONE: I think just loving yourself and finding joy in what you do and know that there are some poem that may even -- and know that there are even some people that may even turn against you or get angry with you, like I've had people screaming at me because I didn't add another person that they wanted odd mural, you know. And -- that they wanted on the mural. And just know that you yourself are trying to do the right thing for the community and

that's all you could do. And then remember to invite everybody, like I always put flowers on the bottom of my murals and so I invite the school kids to come and paint flowers on the mural. I don't care if they're two years old, I tell them to come. Some people bring their two-year-old kids and help them paint a flower. So that makes people own that mural. There's a lot of people that own it. It's about 1,000, on this 92 feet there's about 1,000 flowers on that mural that children painted, and it looks beautiful and you would never know that it was done by children. You know, you would never know. Some of them are out of shape and everything, but when they're all together and that's the way flowers look anyway when they're all together.

>> KATIE WADE: Right.

>> EDYTH BOONE: So it works, you know, having the flowers at the bottom. And then, you know, all the people that go by, they'll tell you, oh, I can't paint. I encourage people who think that they can't paint ask show them that they can. But, you know, just like being open to the community in a way that just shows love and empathy for people because they need that now. Sometimes I'm walking

down the street, and I'm 81 now, I'm 81 now, but when I'm walking down the street and I see people --

>> KATIE WADE: Say that again, Edie, we lost you.

>> EDYTH BOONE: I said I'm 81 but when I'm walking down the street I will say to a person, like if they're walking home from church they look like, I'll say oh, you're so beautiful, and they'll smile. But that's the way you just -- it's like paying it forward, you know what I mean? So many good things that happened to me too, you know, I mean, I've got a chance to paint on this mural, Maestrapeace mural that made me famous, and I got into the magazine at the (?) museum this month, with the seven of us, and Creed Apollo is on the front, and Angela Davis, and that's a miracle.

>> KATIE WADE: I'm glad you're reaping what you've sown, the core message which has been a thread this morning is loving yourself and turning that to the community and inviting them in, and you've done that. It's so evident in your work. So I sure appreciate being a small part of that for this conversation. So Edie, we're going on move on to our next speaker. Is there anything else you might want to share with the audience or where they might find more

information?

>> EDYTH BOONE: They can Google my name, there's a lot of information, they can Google it, and I would just say just have fun, whatever you do, I always tell people don't let anyone take your joy away, you know, even if somebody gets angry with you, you don't have to go with that anger, you can say I'm going to be happy today so just keep your joy inside of you.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you very much Edie for that message, I really appreciate you joining today. Have a good one.

>> EDYTH BOONE: Thank you for inviting me.

>> KATIE WADE: For everyone at home, they can join -- I mean, they can Google Edie or check her out in the library, there's a lot of information about Edythe Boone. Our next speaker, we'll invite Julie Pfitzinger back as our co-host.

### **Speaker: Louise Aronson**

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Good morning I have the privilege of speaking with Dr. Louise Aronson this morning, a leading geriatrician, writer, educator, professor of medicine at the University of California San Francisco. She's the author of the New York Times bestseller, *Elderhood*,

refining aging, transforming medicine, reimagining life, which is available at bookstores, libraries and as an audio book, also large print version, also on Kindle so you can get it everywhere. Dr. Aronson is the recipient of a MacDowell fellowship, she has four Pushcart nominations, she is a regular contributor to the New York time, the New England Journal of Medicine, she was awarded teacher of the year award from the American geriatrics society, and she has a Gold Professorship for Humanism in medicine, I hope I got that, and I'm sure there's much more. Welcome, Louise, I'm excited to talk to you today.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: I'm really happy to be here. Thanks.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Great. As I mentioned, I highly encourage people to pick up Elderhood in whatever form they like, it's a fascinating, fascinating book. So just to start off here, I thought we would talk about the idea of stories because throughout Elderhood, you have woven many, many stories, personal stories but also stories of patients that you worked with over the years and everyone has a story, everyone's story is powerful, no matter what our age is, no matter what our circumstances. So tell me a little bit about why stories inspire you and how we can learn from

each others' stories.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: I love that question. I think stories are our fundamental means of communication. There's not a culture or society that doesn't begin with stories, doesn't define themselves as individuals or as a group with stories. We tell stories to our kids from the very beginning, it's sort of how we make sense of the world. And I've always loved them. I was a kid who liked to read and imagine myself as, you know, a spy or a basketball player or a variety of other entirely unlikely things, and then when I became a doctor accident I kind of realized that doctoring is a lot like stories, really listening to people's stories, for what they say, for what they don't say, and I just fell full up with them and that was how I ended up getting a writing degree. So I thought it would be two different worlds for me, but pulling them together lets me do what we sometimes call as educators edutainment, the book should be entertaining, that's my writer hat, but also full of useful interesting information, that's my doctor hat, and pulling them together I think I do it pretty explicitly but I think we all do it all the time.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That's great. And to just sort of tie that together, as I said, there's so much rich content in this would come, but one thing that struck my attention was a section where you talk about in your profession, you are very responsible for electronic medical record keeping, and so because of the focus on data, you and all the doctors have to be on the computer jotting down notes but that sort of becomes a little bit of a stumbling block for telling the stories, like the anecdotal what you're seeing, what you're hearing from the folks who are sitting in front of you. So data will never go away, that's important, you have to capture all that, but how as a doctor do you try and sort of bridge that gap in those meetings with people where they might be frightened about what's going on, they might feel alone or something, like how do you sort of bridge that gap?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Well, if they're feeling frightened or if they're a brand-new patient to me or if it's just one of those moments where, I mean, you can feel them as a human being, then I don't type on the computer. I also have a Notepad and a pen or I scribble some notes so that I get it right later, because I've got a full clinic, leaving

it to memory becomes a less good idea with the capacity, you know, but I make sure I get it down. But it's an interesting thing because they kind of set us up that way. The most efficient doctors will simply type while you're in the room without exception and be essentially done with their notes when the patient leaves, but what the medical record wants from us isn't the story. It's have you done this and have you done that. And if you want to also tell a story, you have to click all those boxes and put in the required information, but for me, I spend time both before I see a patient going through their record and their stories and then after pulling it together into a coherent story because that enables me to know them and pull together what's going on with them, but it takes a lot of time and that is time we are not compensated for. It's not built into the system, and the records have some huge advantages. When people come from even outside my system, I can see their past notes in many cases. That is huge. But the disadvantage is that if you want to tell the patient's story and even the story of how you're interpreting things and putting them together, that comes out of your personal time, and so I'm academic, I only see

patients a few times a week, I can make that happen, but if you're a full-time clinician, that's virtually impossible.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That's really interesting. So another thing I noticed when I was reading your book was about language, and I think as a writer you choose your words very carefully, you tell stories so well, but one specific part of language I would like to talk about is that how in society all of us should choose our words more carefully when it relates to what is sort of called elderspeak, we've written a lot about that on Next Avenue, the diminutive forms of language, you referred to the word "cute" in your book about how it's really infantilizing and insulting when you're talking to an older adult. So how do you think that this kind of language is really damaging to discourse, this infantilizing language to describe an older person?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Well, it's interesting because sometimes people will literally move into a baby voice or not speak to the human being in front of them, who might be, you know, fully functional, just old, or might have some challenges, but that doesn't mean a person doesn't want to have social interactions or conversations. And so

it's just sort of shortsighted for all of us as human beings, since most of us will become old if we're not there already, it's inconsiderate, it has a sort of ableism to take it beyond aging to a more general thing. It disadvantages so many different types of people, and this is just the elderspeak version of that. And kind of two minds about cute. I think cute is bad when used in an infantilized way, but in my dating years, if people liked a boy or a girl, you know, you would say he or she was cute, and actually had a sex appeal and a perfectly adult ring to it. So I don't think cute is always infantilizing. It might be less the word than the way people use it.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Yes, yes.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: And I think that's true for all the language around old age because when you poll people, we don't like any of the descriptors, like not so much about the language, that's about social prejudice.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right. Exactly. That's very true, there are a lot of other very different words too, but it all gets to, as you've pointed out, the notion of respect, you know, respecting each other, we should all respect each other no matter how old we are, that's just a basic human

behavior.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Right. If somebody calls me an adult or middle-aged person, I don't feel insulted or diminished.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right. Right.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: The same should be the case if somebody calls you old or elderly or something else. In the medical literature we're required to use the phrase older adult, and that's based on surveys. That's what people prefer. But I feel like it's ageist because yes, we're often older than some people, but at some point we're frankly old, we all know that. Certainly where you draw the line is very personal, but I think we could all agree somebody who is 90 or 106 is old. And adult, by pulling that in, you sort of increase the power but that means that you're admitting basically that being an elder is not a powerful position, and I reject that argument.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Absolutely. I love that. That's very true. So I learned many things in your book, but one thing was the definition in Latin of imagination, which is picture to oneself, so how do you think, this is sort of switching gears a little bit, how do you think that tapping into our imaginations can help all of us be true to

ourselves as we grow older and also how finding that creativity through our imagination, through how we perceive ourselves can help us to be more resilient as we are faced with different challenges in life? How can we learn from that word and make that really our own and be comfortable with who we are?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: I think that's one of the best questions about aging because almost everybody has the feeling, and I've been told this by patients for 25 years and I have in more recent years had the experience myself, when you feel just like yourself, and when an identity forms, we are young. So then you look in the mirror, and I have patients tell me all the time, I feel like me and then I look in the mirror and I think, who is that old man? Who is that old woman, right?

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: That appears to be a human universal. So I think one of the key ways we can and should engage our imaginations is imagining our more mature older selves and imagining who that person is, who he, she or they can be in the world, and letting that guide a new version because life would become pretty boring if we stayed as the same

us, and we don't. And given that we don't, why not participate in creating an older you that you like or that gets to do things, you know, with age sometimes you can't do things that you used to do or you can't do them in the same ways. And there's abundant data plus again years of experience show that the people who will say, okay, capability do that anymore in that way, but I'm going to do it this way, and they still get to do it, are so much happier, and we now know that that happiness, that sort of adaptability correlates with better health outcomes, living not just longer but better. So the imagination is how we adapt to our new selves and how we create our new selves. You are basically the artist of yourself, and yes of course, there are economic constraints and social and cultural constraints, but we always have constraints in it life, so work with the materials you have. I sort of, you know, like you can give kids a spoon and they'll play with it, and you can give certain entrepreneurs, you know, like \$10 and they'll make the company. And you don't need a lot to create a self.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: I love that, you are the artist of yourself, I think that's just such a smart and insightful,

we should remember that every day, we are the artist of ourselves, I love that. Speaking about artists, we talked a little bit about this the other day too, in your book you quote a lot of writers, poets, Donald Hall, Ranking, writer Kyle Onasgard and Bruce Springsteen and bring sort of these cultural figures as little touch points throughout your book and so I'm just curious how as you were writing Elderhood how did that sort of process come about? How did you think now I would like to write about Bruce Springsteen? How did that happen?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Part of it was I had a contract for this book for many years before I actually had the time to write it and I started collecting things and reading things because I'm endlessly fascinated by aging and old age and I sat down write the book and obviously it has a lot about medicine and about health because that's my life but I felt like one of the key messages was that what happens and does not happen in medicine and health in terms of aging and old people is precisely what happens and doesn't happen in our larger society. So what I wanted so pull in from popular culture and history and people who deal with other sorts of oppression and disadvantage, to show how this is all part

and parcel of the same larger social system and that the influences are all related, that I'm not just talking about medicine and healthcare, I'm talking about lives and how we live. And plus those people are also smart and interesting, and so it was just sort of a pleasure to both in the form of the book and in the content show how there is a weave that makes each of our lives and that all these things are part of it.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Great. I love that. I love that. So with so many demands on your life every day, I was just wondering, where do you find your creative spark?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Oh, well, I don't always get to exercise it.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Right, right.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: But I think I'm very much my best, most creative person first thing in the morning, so get that clear slate. Also being outside walking, exercising, that's also a proven thing, it sort of stimulates the brain, it's kind of why we also advise that to anyone at any age but particularly as you're getting older, if your brain isn't quite doing what you want, the more you can walk and exercise, the more you get stimulation to the

brain, so often even just walking my dog, who stops constantly, will be a moment of inspiration. Male dog. So there's a lot of sniffing and stopping. And then, you know, my patients send other things I read and I just find other people really inspiring, people I see on the street, people I get the tremendous pleasure of talking to in my clinic, interesting things I read. If you're kind of open to it, you can make use of most things.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Things people can do every day, like you said, take a short walk, get some fresh air, get yourself revved up, I love that. The other thing I was going to ask you about was books that you like to read and I'm going to ask you, what are like three books on your night stand right now that you're trying to get to or that you read every night or what are you interested in right now?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Oh, I go back and forth between nonfiction and fiction. So right now I'm reading for nonfiction Arthur Kleinman's *Soul of Care*, he and I are on a panel together I think in March that will be on C-Span and is at the Tucson book festival and he has also you'll see he's quoted in my book, he's the one who got me

thinking about how culture influences health. That was in the 80s. I have two fiction Ocean Wong who started as a poet, this book last year was raved about: On earth we are briefly gorgeous, and already the language and the story tremendous, and then I have Ya Giassi's Homecoming also. I tend for these book that are Uber popular to read them a year or two later, I can't really explain that behavior, it's maybe childish, but that's always what I do, I know these books were hugely popular a year ago but I'm finally getting to them. I'm looking forward to both.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: That's great. That's wonderful. Well, I should stop and see if we have any questions that have come in for Dr. Aronson, that would be great to find out. Katie? Are you there?

>> KATIE WADE: I am. And you touched on this, Louise, a question from the audience, but I think you could go a little deeper maybe is, well, let me read it more specifically, I'm not going to ad lib. From the audience, I enjoyed your interview with Terry NPR so much especially your candid and helpful conversation around loss. What can you share with us about tapping into resiliency and creativity when facing loss as an older adult?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Such a good and critically important point. There's a lot about sort of healthy aging or anti-ageism lately that really focuses on what might be called the easier or early years of Elderhood, but the fact is if you live into your later 70s, 80s and beyond, you're going to have lost people who meant a lot to you and you may have lost certain roles that meant a lot to you, and that's a fact.

But I think it's a fact that doesn't acknowledge the ways in which we as a society contribute to that, so there's less and less interaction among generations, and if we have more intergenerational relationships, like Katie I love that you're doing this with your very young face on the screen, it's fabulous, I think if we had more relationships like that, I mean, obviously a friendship of five years or twenty years isn't going to replace one of sixty years, but it gives you an ongoing network, and if you don't have that other interests or activities or places where you could go and meet some people, and younger might mean somebody who is 60 or 50, it doesn't have to be -- or 75. It can mean lots of different things. I think for creativity, you could pull that in in a variety of ways, like being

creative about what sort of place that you are might go to that maybe isn't the sort of place you ever would have gone to before or maybe it's an artistic sort of place because art we have around San Francisco all these banners that say creativity, oh, God, now I'm going to get it wrong, oh, I have some on my desk here, creativity never gets old. And intelligence never gets old. Et cetera. So engaging in that way. And then again, that sort of self-invention, thinking about, okay, I'm feeling sad, and I think also allowing yourself to feel sad but trying not to have it that completely cripple you, like every day can you do something that will nourish you, and as you get further from the loss, add more things in, and again, exercise releases endorphins, which are happy, happy hormones and chemicals in your brain, so just getting out and getting some sun on you, if there is anywhere where you live, I'm a little biased to California in there, but even any kind of fresh air and seeing trees or anything, if there's a park near you, things like that can really help. Maybe remembering activities that you didn't have time to do in adulthood. Elderhood is really good for going back to those things and going back to them without the pressure of

I can't do this if I can't make a living off it. You know, you have a stronger -- you have a stronger sense of self to say hey, so I'm not the world's best pianist or painter or whatever it is, I like this, and I'm going to work at getting better at it, because that just feels good.

>> KATIE WADE: That's so good. It reminds me of the conversations I've had a lot with the next speaker, Lucky Goff, around sometimes in older age you're able to let go of the economic value that you must have in our society, right, and that like cracks wide open for exploration.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Right, in gerontology literature it's called a stage of greater freedom, because you're away from those pressures of having when you're really young, you're trying to establish yourself as a person of some, you know, meaning or worth or talent or ability or income or something and then you're sort of striving through adulthood. In most big studies, adulthood is the time of most stress and striving. So then in Elderhood you're kind of liberated and to see that not just in terms of loss, but as opportunity really helps. It's amazing how even playing little mind games with yourself can really make a difference in how you feel and what you're able to do and

how you can appreciate what you are able to do.

>> KATIE WADE: And there's research, right, backing that up.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Yeah, and about attitudes in terms of health. I mean, there's really interesting research showing that if people have negative attitudes about aging, they recover less well from illness, they're more likely to have Alzheimer's markers in their spinal fluid, you know, they have heart disease years earlier and there's even more data on kind of optimism and health outcomes, and that's a little loaded, again, right, because some people have more reasons to be optimistic, if you're born wealthy and you've never been hungry and you had all these opportunities, you might be a more optimistic person than a person who didn't have all those other things. But it turns out we can cultivate it, you know, and that we see people across the economic spectrum who are optimists and so there is question about are there ways you can do that or if you know someone who is that, can you get them to kind of help you, if they say something, you frame it in an optimistic way, and you practice it, and it feels weird and awkward at first and eventually it becomes more second nature.

>> KATIE WADE: I love that and it's really touching on a question we got from the audience around when you're trying to reinvent yourself and coming up against some pretty big obstacles relate to aging, what skills are most useful, and I think you touch on that quite a bit. Is there anything you would want to add to that?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: I would add that I have increasingly seen groups of older people banding together so that you have a support system, and I guess I would have a corollary to that, that it doesn't need to be old people altogether, like it often is because our segregated ageist society, but invite other people in. I have a colleague, Dr. Joanne (?) who many years ago said one of my favorite sayings, which is, you know, for people who aren't yet old, we are all old people in training. And the more that we work intergenerationally, the more we are all prepared to thrive as we get older, and we learn how to do that by helping others thrive. But if you're running up against people, there are so many older people banding together in various ways to support each other and create networks that provide happiness and meaning and purpose.

>> KATIE WADE: Perfect. We'll talk about that in our

next speaker too about how to find those networks, jump right into that.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Yay.

>> KATIE WADE: Another question from the audience for Louise, what are you looking forward to as you get older?

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Well, right now I work probably 80, 85 hours a week and I'm looking forward to doing less work, although I love, love, love what I do. I am looking forward to getting a little more healthy because even though I spend a lot of time talking about health and aging, I'm working so much that my own health is not being tended to as well as it might. I'm looking forward to more time for reading and writing, things I love, but I do less of in the years where I need to make a living and get our family some health insurance. So I think many things. I guess maybe I'm looking forward to being surprised by who I become because already I'm surprised by the last decade of my life, and I hope that I continue to be surprised in ways that I can see as positive even though there are obviously associated particularly physical disappointments, you know, that I think yes, there are disappointments and there are so many other good things. And I have literally spent the

last few years, partly because I was writing the book, training myself in that way we were just talking about, which is how I know it works, or one of the ways it, there's also data, not just my experience, but really focusing more on those positive things and feeling them.

>> KATIE WADE: So good. Julie, anything else are your end?

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: No, I think that's great. Wow. You've had some just really inspiring ideas for people, and I just -- it's just been a pleasure, thank you very much.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Thank you for your awesome questions, that made it really fun and easy.

>> KATIE WADE: Ditto. Thank you so much for joining, Louise. We couldn't get to all the audience questions, I apologize, we'll move on to our next speaker and let Louise have a great rest of your day.

>> LOUISE ARONSON: Thank you. Enjoy the conference.

>> KATIE WADE: Thanks, Julie, I appreciate your co-hosting there.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Thank you.

>> KATIE WADE: It's been lovely to have you today.

>> JULIE PFITZINGER: Thank you very much, Katie, I've

enjoyed it.

## **Wrap-Up Experience: David 'Lucky' Goff**

>> KATIE WADE: Next up I think we have, let me see, Lucky, can you hear me?

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Yeah.

>> KATIE WADE: All right. Let me introduce someone I again have such pleasure to introduce to you all and this is it Dr. David Goff, whom I know as Lucky, many of you know as Lucky, and Lucky is back for the third year of the symposium by popular demand, very popular demand. So welcome back, and Lucky is an author and community organizer. He had a brain aneurysm in 2003 which led to the onset of a rare brain syndrome, the brink of death, and then permanent disability. This experience had a transformative effect on Lucky, making him -- his name was David, and it made him "Lucky" and queued him into how radically connected all things really are. This broader awareness about now informed his approach to what it means to be human, and David Lucky writes extensively about psychology of interdependence and community, elders, the conditions that can lead us to feel connected in our society, and I think one of the things I love most about

Lucky's work is that he approaches aging in a new and innovative ways, and learning techniques from a host of different oral traditions, this is a way I've introduced him before and I want to get this right, to say these techniques discover what promotes, heals and binds together a culture where elders are seen and see themselves as valuable and essential contributors. So I invited Lucky to be our final speaker today because he's -- because he has a unique ability to take a conversation about aging and Elderhood deeper and unravel some of the connections that are below the surface. So welcome, Lucky.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Thank you, Katie.

>> KATIE WADE: I can hear you a little bit. Let's see. It's a little low, just if there's anything you can change. But if not, we can hear you.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Does this help?

>> KATIE WADE: That's wonderful.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Great.

>> KATIE WADE: Lucky, I of course have some questions for you, but I wonder if there's anything on your mind about creativity and resiliency that you want to start with.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Yes, I do have something I want to say, so thank you for that opportunity. I gave it some thought this morning about what I would like to share with you all, and what came to me was I hope some people will take away from this conference the word unbeing because I think it's really important for people to recognize, at least it was for me, unbeing, that creation has been a priority for me all my life, and I think it's operating through everyone who comes to this event, everyone who doesn't as well. I just wanted to say that evolution and life have our backs. So no matter what, we're created by virtue of existing, and having to make choices all along the way which inevitably end up with us creating ourselves. So we're all artists, and just by virtue of the fact we exist. So that's all I really wanted to say, Katie. If people can take away some sense of how unbeing everything is, then creation is coming through us right now, and we are participants in creation, then we'll be plenty.

>> KATIE WADE: That's enough to get us started for quite a while, yes. Yeah, I agree. And I couldn't agree more that the act of being, or unbeing, is creative. Absolutely.

I want to call attention to kind of what you do, like what you just did, so folks can get a sense of, you know, what it means to unwrap some of the ideas we have about aging or creativity. You once used the term social artists to describe this type of interaction that we're having. Could you tell us more about what that means?

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Well, I'll tell you what it means to me. Maybe others by hearing those words will have meanings of their own, and they may have some very interesting meanings they could bring to it, but for my sake, what actually drove me to those words was I was a psychotherapist before I had this aneurysm, and luckily I was in relationship for a while with a woman that was an artist, a fabric artist, had shows all around the world, had several pieces in incredible museums all over the place, and I was jealous of her because she was clearly an artist. It was part of her identity, everywhere she went. And I realized that psychotherapy for me was not really a science, it was an art form. The better I could be with people, the better outcome there would be. So I also after the stroke realized that my passion was trying to build community, and I recognized that community was a -- it

wasn't a thing, it was an experience. And I think for me, I realized that creating the opportunity for experiences that people can share and bring themselves to, that was really what I wanted to do, and that was my particular form of artistry. So from that came the idea that actually I was a social artist. I really wanted to create a social space where people could come together and discover just how connected they were to each other -- to each other and to the large world they were part of.

>> KATIE WADE: It makes me think quite a bit about how your work has impacted me when I think about connection, which is a big part of my job, it always has been, I also started as a mental health therapist, but connection has been this through thread or lack of or wanting quality, more quality connection in everything I've tackled in my work world, and now I see it everywhere, it's become so important, but not just connection to others. One thing that you've taught me is the importance of connection to self, you know, and we ask this question of new staff and new volunteers, what about growing older are you looking forward to? And the thing I often think about, I'm quite aware of my answer to this question is really influenced by

you, which is I'm really excited for the opportunity to dive more deeply into myself because the elders that I see are doing that type of work. So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about like, you know, the connection to yourself part of what you do.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Well, that's a good question and I think a very important and relevant one because so much people influenced bit message of self, and the thing I want to say about self and the in current of self seems to grow as we grow. As we get older, we get closer and closer to ourselves, and also, I would say, to the big picture of life. There is an interesting relationship between self and other. There isn't like a hard boundary. It's a permeable one, and so inquiring into self is inquiring into the universe. It isn't one or the other. It's both and. And that's what makes it both exciting because there's a lot of discovery that can take place, and, you know, in terms of creativity and resilience, what could be more creative than the universe, having a universe inside oneself and being able to access those incredible depths and that incredible age and the energy that's there. Wow. So that's my answer generally.

>> KATIE WADE: Wow, you're blowing my mind. I don't have words. Thank you, Lucky, I think that was so beautifully said and resonates deeply. At the risk of moving on from such beauty, I do, there's a question from the audience that I think you're uniquely suited to answer, which is, how would you describe the difference between an older adult and an elder?

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: That's a good question. I spend a lot of time in my writing meditations trying to differentiate between people which I call merely older and people that are on the other path. And my best answer to that question right now is that those who are merely older are trapped in ruts of their own making. Merely older people seem to be caught in ruts, whereas people who are elders are much more willing to confront themselves, confront their ruts, and also to confront reality, as it is, rather than as we would prefer it to be. So that's my answer. What's yours?

>> KATIE WADE: Goodness. You know, when I think of elder, I have a few like pictures of people that come to mind, you know, images. You're certainly one of those. And then I think of one of my co-workers Pat who has

embraced all of the words that describe getting older, owns it, and really has been such a guide for me around, you know, what it means to embrace Elderhood, to dive deeper into being older and unpacking aging. So when I think about those models, there seems to be this strength, like this ability to recognize what you've mentioned some of the realities that we face in life and in getting older, but there's this strength in how you respond to those, like that's your choice, right? And that choice is kind of therein lies the older adult or elder balance, right? Which, yeah. So I think that's a little bit of a vague response, something I might think about more deeply, and I also feel like I'm trying to figure it out for myself, right? Like I want to be on that path to Elderhood and not merely an older adult. So I'm like actively mulling over these things.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Well, my experience of you, Katie, is you are on that path and don't worry about it, okay?

>> KATIE WADE: Don't worry about it, thank you, Lucky.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: While you were speaking, Katie, I was thinking about one more thing that I really wanted to

convey, and that is I was in a relationship with someone who was a really good cook, so I got introduced to a lot of different things about cooking that I didn't know. One of them was the notion of reduction. That one spoke to me because I think that's also part of what aging is all about. I know in my own case, it was the losses, as Louise was pointing out, that I endured which sensitized me and made me more aware of what life was all about. So I use the metaphor of reduction to convey the rather paradoxical aspect of aging, which is as we lose things, as we're reduced, as those of you who may have been cooks or may be cooks, you know that reduction means putting all of these ingredients into some kind of pressure, maybe it's heat, maybe it's other pressures, and they lose their form and take on a new form.

Actually there is a reduction of volume, which leads to a clarification of taste and intensification of substance. So as one loses, one gains clarity, one gains self, one gains by uniqueness, by virtue of being put under this intense pressure. So in my mind, that is exactly what happens to us as we age. We slowly lose functionality, but miraculously, along with losing functionality,

simultaneously we're gaining intensity, gaining clarity, gaining uniqueness, gaining what's inside us is becoming more and more vivid. So we gain taste, gain flavor, we become something amazing.

And you know, one thing I wanted to say, since this is primarily a conference of aging people, an aging held a uniqueness that I think is unrecognized culturally. There is a special gift that aging brings in that it is contiguous with growing older. We just become more and more ourselves, and we become more and more a miracle of what was intended through creation.

>> KATIE WADE: Whew. That is some good stuff, Lucky. I had to write down that, you know, the clarification that comes with loss and then that aging, the uniqueness that is unrecognized culturally. What it made me think of is one thing that you and Louise did really well was say of course aging comes with loss and change and difficulty, right, of course, and with that is this whole other thing we don't talk about in our society, right, the whole narrative is around loss. And I have totally embraced that in recent years and through meeting people like you of those two things not only just living side by side but the

clarification coming from the loss. I wonder, and I'm not as eloquent as you, but when I've said this to some folks in my life, there's this resistance, like yeah, but. You know, is the clarification worth the loss? And I wonder about your thoughts on that.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: So yes, I would say loss and gain are intricately connected. Okay? And actually, one of the ways I am extraordinarily nonconventional is I actually think what we call losses are incredible gifts. I know in my own life, not only do I call myself Lucky, but I'm aware that I've benefited so much by the things that I thought were tragedies in my life, and so I'm encouraging many people now to consider that the hardships they are facing or have faced have actually carried them to a new place in their lives. It is frequently a place of greater sensitivity, greater awareness and greater self. And to that extent, wow, what a gift. So I wouldn't go back. If someone asked me if I could go back and not be as disabled as I am, which is pretty horrible, when you look at me, I look pretty bad, but I am blessed and I know it. And because I know it, I have a totally different outlook than most people. I can see what a blessing it is that we're

taken down in ways, we're reduced to our essence, what a gift it is to know one's essence before it's all over.

>> KATIE WADE: Great. I have many thoughts popping up from that and about the pursuit of one's essence, or I wonder if you think -- I guess there's a part of me that thought when you were talk it go, like oh, are there certain tips or skills that you used that got you to this place, or I think in a lot of our conversations previously you talked about some of the natural experience of it.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Yeah.

>> KATIE WADE: You know, talk to some of that?

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: So I want to use this opportunity of that question to underscore what I was trying to say before. Maybe it will make more sense now. And also maybe I'm more relaxed and can say it better. But what occurs to us upon birth is in my mind miraculous. For instance, consider that a baby, an infant, is reaching out for something that is enticing and that baby has to learn how to reach, has to mobilize itself, has to organize itself to reach for something and finally it is able, by virtue of the gifts that we have naturally, to organize itself and reach something that it really wants and put it in its

mouth and begin to express that, but the same thing is true for instance for old people. Whatever appeals to us, wherever we want to be, what it is in life that we want to do and convey, because of our desire for that, we end up naturally organizing ourselves and becoming exactly one who is capable of it. Okay? It isn't just our efforts alone. Nature pitches in and says go for it. I want you to be whatever you can achieve. And just like we get pubic hair when we get adolescence, we get the gift of life pulling for us as we age. Life is ready, it's presenting us with the challenges we're capable of facing. The metaphor I use is dancing. Life is the leader, and our creativity is how we follow. I'm thinking now of a quote I learned when reading Victor Frankel's book about surviving the death camps. He said: There is one freedom that we have that can't be taken away from us, that is how we play the cards that are dealt to us.

So creativity, in my mind, is how I play the cards that are dealt to me. How I deal with all of the challenges that come my way. All of the opportunities that aging may bring. That's all I have to say, Katie.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Lucky. There's a question

from the audience, from Sherry. Sherry says, thank you for lifting up life blessings and self-inquiry that leads to clarification on purpose to move uniquely forward. How far do you keep the practices of gratitude and purpose going as we age?

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: You know, that's interesting. I'm not a practice person. I think as I said, I really think life is a teacher. Life throws me the raw materials of everything of what becomes a practice. It's like life instructs me through the opportunities I have in each moment. If I have a practice, it's trying to recognize the medicine in any given moment. Trying to recognize what it is this moment offers me. And happily I've developed some capacity to embrace the moment.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you. There's another question from Michael in the audience. What is your definition of interdependence and how do we develop it to enhance our lives?

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Well, that's a complex question. I don't have a short answer to that question, mainly because interdependence, in my mind, relies on connection with everything around one, so I experience incredible

sense of vulnerability and includedness by virtue of just being a part of the whole, not being the whole. And interdependence on my part means that I am part of the whole and I rely on the whole to manifest who I am as fully as possible. So for me, community is really important and the opportunity, as I said, to be a social artist, to create as much community wherever I go as I can is exactly that my desire to participate in something larger than me all the time.

>> KATIE WADE: It makes me think that it would probably be good to share with the audience about the groups you lead to dive deeper into Elderhood, elder salons and that concept.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Well, Louise referred to this near the end of what she was talking about, and it's really actually, I've found, very important for us old people to rub shoulders with other old folks because through the process of rubbing shoulders, through the process of discovering how others perceive reality, there is a kind of awakening that happens. So old people actually have done more for me to uproot the internalizations I've had because others recognize it and can help me see beyond it. So I

think there is a lot about getting older, the gifts of getting older especially, that other old people can help us perceive. So it's really important to bring together old people because we enjoy each other, there's a lot of fun that can happen and a lot of recognition of the larger processes and the way they are working in our lives to make us even more of ourselves. So that's my response. I probably could say more, but I won't, okay?

>> KATIE WADE: Could I get to you say a smidge about the process of it? You've invited other older adults to sit in a circle or be on a phone conference kind of in the circle idea and then you prompt them with a question, or --

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Oh, okay, you're asking me to actually talk about the logistics, how I do it and stuff. And you know, I'm a psychotherapist who has held groups all of my professional life, so it's pretty easy for me to invite people in to be present in a group, but I know for most people, it seems more daunting. But in fact I think especially with old people, there is so much joy that gets discovered through interacting, I remember the very first meeting of the elder salon, there were a lot of old people who weren't sure they wanted to be around a lot more old

people, so it's a little bit daunting for them, but soon they discovered the richness of stories, the richness of presence, the richness of experience that was present and were so happy to be able to share some things that rarely get shared in this culture. So, you know, it didn't usually take my effort to create conversation, it really just was creating a space, inviting people into it, and they pretty much were eager to have conversations with each other and to embrace each other. So maybe the one thing I brought to the process was the desire to gather, and once that gathering happened, it took off, it had life of its own. So I would encourage anyone who feels the impulse, you don't have to be educated, you do not have to be a therapist, you don't have to have any particular specialized skills, all you need to have is a desire to bring people together and good questions. That's all.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you. Then you did those groups in person, and you've also been doing a group on the phone through Well Connected, and tell us a smidge about that. Anyone can join, or --

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Yes, anyone can join. So just contact Well Connected and they'll let you know how to

join, and it's easy.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah. Go ahead.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: And I just want to say the opportunity to listen to 80, 90-year-old people who really have lost everything that can be lost, I know there are people on that call that are people like myself who are disabled and have been for 30, 40 years, and the opportunity to listen to them and hear how they have found a way to make their lives meaningful and to experience directly how much courage, how much enlightenment is just part of life comes as one gets older, and to be able to bask in the light of it for a little while is incredibly uplifting. So you know, I might think by interacting with a bunch of broken down old people that it's going to be a bummer, but in fact, it's uplifting.

>> KATIE WADE: Very much so. And I feel as a young person such privilege to have been able to join some of your calls and then also an in-person elder salon and I often tell people this, having a career where I get exposed when I was 20 years old to adults in their 60s, 70s, 90s, is like someone just wrapped up this beautiful gift with a big red bow and handed me life in a gift and

that's how I felt joining elder salon in person and on the phone, I feel like as a young person getting some of the insight into aging and such a wide variety of people, like how they're tackling it in different ways or existing in different ways, it is amazingly powerful as a young person to watch that happen, so it's not only a benefit I think to other elders in the group, what a gift to just be an observer even.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Yeah. I would share with you one social creative impulse I've had, not just me, but other elders have been really the ones who created this, but I've been refining it in my mind. There is an elder group in a local town Sonoma who wants to attend the local farmers' market on Sunday morning and set up a table just so people can see that old people exist and they're around. And I was thinking about a banner I would like to see on that table, which is: Life gets better. Ask an elder. Life does get better. And that's one of the more important things that people need to know, especially young people, especially in this world we live in today. It's really important to know that life can get better. So I'm suffering the same ambiguities everybody else is with the

environment and the politics of the moment and the level of distrust that exists everywhere, but at the same time, I'm being bombarded with a perpetual recognition of how miraculous this life is that helps me deal with what's difficult.

So, life does get better.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Lucky. It's a bit of a radical message, actually, that life gets better as we get older.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: It is a radical message, unfortunately.

>> KATIE WADE: I know. Yeah, it is unfortunate. But you know, I can remember in my own, you know, I'm on this journey like all of us around unpacking the lessons I've been taught about aging, the lessons that are so prevalent in our society, and I can remember a point where after years of this kind of work of finally getting to a point where I thought, I can't wait to grow older because I can see so clearly that will life does get better, but it took me a long time to do some of that unpacking, and I wonder if you have any thoughts for folks attempting that journey, other than what you stated, but how would I get started?

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: So I've got news for you, Katie, you are aging right now. So you don't have to set out on a journey. The journey is already happening. Katie, the insights are going to come toward you when you're ready for them, and you're being prepared for them all the way, until you're ready for more insights. That's happening, it's clear, I mean, anybody who has the opportunity to interact with you gets to know very quickly that you are one who allows yourself to be touched by these things, so it radiates from your being.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Lucky, you always comfort me that I'm on the right path without having to do anything different. Which I think is probably comforting for a lot of folks, actually.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: It's a shocking realization, isn't it?

>> KATIE WADE: Truly. It's very different than how I think we as a society and certainly myself approach most things in life, which is like give me the steps, I want to -- let me go down this list, right?

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: Yeah. And know for me the journey, as you put it, has been from deficit, and you

know, I was raised Catholic, and Catholics have the idea of original sin, so I came in pretty much behind the 8 ball, and happily aging has brought me out from behind the 8 ball. The 8 ball has shrunk and shrunk and shrunk, and I've grown and grown and grown, and suddenly the world looks weirdly different.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Lucky. Acknowledging that we only have a couple of minutes left and I have some things to wrap up with, I wonder if there's anything else we haven't touched on already that you want to be sure we hit upon.

>> DAVID 'LUCKY' GOFF: No, I just wanted to say thank you. This opportunity to be with people who care about this kind of thing is wonderful. Thank you.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Lucky, I so appreciate you being here with us today, and I'll let U get about your day as I wrap things up here. Thank you for so much to chew on.

## **Conclusion:**

All right. So thanks to Lucky, then here we are at the final few minutes, thanks for sticking with us and hearing some great messages today. I have two -- one thing that's

so important when we take in tons of information like we have today and lots of inspiration, I think it's so important to kind of think about, you know, what do we do moving forward, what do I do with this? So I have two brief challenges for you in our wrap-up today. You heard Louise Aronson, author and geriatrician talk about her book *Elderhood*, which I have a copy right in front of me, so you can see this, and like many people have lots of notes because it's so good and there's this one piece that I found really impactful, she's talking about Cheryl Sandburg's *Lean In*, which advocates to move the conversation from what geriatricians and old people are not, to what they are. This struck me as not only good marketing but the basis for every civil rights campaign that shifts focus from what certain people can't do to what they're already doing and all they can do if they were allowed to.

I love this piece, I think it's such a hugely important tip for us when we consider creativity and resiliency, you know, what if we changed our personal narrative about who we are, instead of what we are not? You know, that little part of your brain that says things like you're not strong

enough, you're not rich enough, pretty enough, smart enough, and on and on, you know, what if we created something new for ourselves? So what if I looked into the mirror today and create a who I am narrative. Right? What if I tell myself I am strong and I am courageous and I am worthy and watch that translate, that individual piece, to my resiliency out into the world. You know, look at me. And I see this in all of our speakers today. I see this in Debra's vibrant personal style, her bold hats, where she gets stopped on the street by young people who want to be her, and I see it in Nancy's strength leading a group of older dancers in collective performance t it's Edie who paints community murals that advocate for change, it's Albertina who lifts up Latina voices through storytelling, it's Lucky and Louise who prod us to think about Elderhood in a fresh new way, so these pieces are in all of us to build our individual resiliency and then take that out in the world and thus change the narrative that we have in our society around aging. So the first wrap up challenge I have for you is to embrace opportunity to adapt and change and thus strengthen that creative muscle, right, for yourself but also for the world. Now, the second challenge

is to continue this conversation. Don't just walk away from today feeling inspired, but continue to join us. I invite you to join us at Well Connected for a multitude of daily and weekly conversations that are inspiring and certainly spark of creative growth. So this summer we'll have a six week series where we review each of the speakers from today and we discuss them together to dive a little deeper, but there are also many other opportunities to connect and even join Lucky every week for a group. You can learn more about Well Connected at [Covia.org](http://Covia.org) or you can call at 877-797-7299, and I would like to thank our Creative Aging San Francisco they are creating virtual meetings which you can read about at [creativeagingSF.org](http://creativeagingSF.org) so we can all have this conversation together virtually, finally I would like to thank Kaiser Permanente and all of you for making this event possible, I cannot wait to hear about how today's celebration sparks Creative Aging in your life, so thanks so much for joining, and goodbye, have a great day.

(The symposium has concluded, 12:15pm PST)

\* \* \* This text, document, or file is based on live transcription. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), captioning, and/or live transcription are provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. This text, document, or file is not to be distributed or used in any way that may violate copyright law. \* \* \*