

# Episode 91: Reinventing yourself? Finding Enoughness through the Poet's Eye, with Donna Ashworth

**Mandy:** What if reinvention wasn't about becoming someone new, but about consciously shedding everything that no longer fits who you're becoming? If you're tired of trying to earn your worth through perfectionism, if you feel like your life is a constant project in, I'm not quite there yet, mode, then this episode is a soul vitamin.

Today's guest knows all about reinvention, and I'm not talking about the glamorous kind. But the kind that unravels you piece by piece until what's left is truer, softer, and yes, more enough than ever. In this episode, we're talking about falling apart and what grows through the cracks. We're talking about the radical idea of being easily pleased in a culture that teaches us to hustle, upgrade, and perfect ourselves endlessly.

And we're talking about one of the most powerful enoughness practices I have ever heard, deciding that you are enough and defending that decision, like your life depends on it. Before we dive in, welcome. I'm your host, Dr. Mandy Leto, ex investment banker, turned executive coach. In every episode of Enough the podcast, I'm in discussion with a guest whose life looks shiny and successful on the outside, and I wanna take us somewhere even more interesting.

What is going on underneath that success? What are the struggles, the dark moments? The profoundly human challenges, both internal and external. We get real and messy and we rise. I hope this podcast challenges how you view your own success. Today's guest, oh, I'm so excited, is Donna Ashworth the number one bestselling poet from Scotland. Her words have comforted, millions. But her path to getting here, wow, it has been winding, uncertain, and full of the kind of invisible pivots that have changed her forever. This conversation is tender wise and very, very real. Let's dive in. I wanted to say a huge congratulations. As far as I know, you're still on the bestseller list today?

**Donna:** Yes, all week. I'll be number one again. So it's, yeah, it's the red, the red one. So that is, it's been on for five weeks now, Mandy, so it's done really, really well. It is done better than any of my other books, so it's really, um. Oh, it's been lovely. It's been really nice.

**Mandy:** I'm so pleased for you. I think one of the things that I love about your work is how relatable it is. 'cause so many times I read something and I'm like, oh, she's talking to me. Yeah, that's exactly written for me. So I think I'm probably not alone in feeling that.

So congratulations. I'm thrilled. What a ti. What a time to be having a conversation. I know. It's perfect timing actually. What does it mean to you to be enough?

**Donna:** I mean, it's such a huge, huge question and it's funny 'cause I've spent the weekend on a meditation weekend and we've been looking at how your brain, your thoughts, you know, affects. Absolutely everything and how you can reinvent your thoughts, reinvent your personality, and that's not like, oh, I don't like myself. I'm gonna become somebody new. It's more I'm exhausted by not feeling enough. I'm exhausted by suffering every day. I know. My instincts are telling me there is an easier way to live life because I look at some people who are not achieving what we would consider to be, you know, accolades on a scale, but they are not comparing themselves. They're not judging themselves. They don't wake up in the morning and feel that they're lacking and they need to do better. So what makes them different from someone like. Who knows what it's like to constantly want to be a perfectionist and, and strive for more to be worthy. And the only difference is the way that they think.

It's nothing to do with what they're doing or particularly their upbringing. It's the, the, the thought of the choices they make in their thoughts every day that they understand that really the big joys, the big achievements are in being easily pleased. If you can become ecstatic by a bulb that just shot a bloom in your garden.

You are winning at life 'cause that's freeing all around you. But if you need to get to number one, for example, to get those highs, or you know to be bigger and better than the person next to you, then you are never going to be done. So to boil it all down to one tiny thing that makes you enough, it's deciding that you're exhausted.

And I'd quite like to be enough now. And it's exactly the point that I am at in my life. I'm 50 next month and we had to choose something I. That we wanted to change in this meditation weekend that we did. One thing of all the things you could change about yourself, I wrote down I'd like to be enough now.

And you know, so the fact that you've just asked me this question the next day is, well, random is never random serendipity, you know, attracts in the same thing. But it is a fascinating, and, and whilst we can say it that simply, it's not really that simple. There is a lot involved in getting to that point. If you are downgrading from an A type person to a, I'm gonna be easily pleased for the rest of my life.

**Mandy:** I think there's something that I was, that I'm noodling on still from my last conversation with Julia Baird, who is an absolutely exquisite human being. We were talking at the beginning about exceptionalism.

Yeah, and this pressure that we can put on ourselves probably with the spaghetti trail, going back down to childhood of the need to be exceptional, that unless I am achieving at the highest possible level in all things, unless I am air quotes special, unless I am, you know. Number one, winning the blue ribbons, getting the gold stars exceptional in every possible way.

Therefore, I'm not enough. And underneath that can be this fear of mediocrity or ordinariness. And what I love what you just said was, I have that visual of that spring blossom. Mm-hmm. You know, the, the tulip bulbs coming up or the highest since coming up and the being easily pleased. I absolutely love that.

**Donna:** I mean, it's the way I watched. I watch people constantly and I watch happy people, and I watch positive people and I watch negative people and I watch unhappy people to try and figure out, you know, what is it in the human condition that provides someone with happiness and knowing what I know scientifically, biologically.

You know, chemically and with physics, I understand the way that your brain creates the chemicals that match your thoughts, that instruct your cells, and your cells create proteins and they, you know, that's, your body literally responds to whatever you are thinking. So if you are constantly afraid or suffering, or not good enough or unhappy, or you need more, then you, you're, you're downgrading your own.

You know, health. Whereas if you are constantly looking for abundance and you're grateful and you're seeing the beauty that's all around you and you're, you're able to stop and go, wow, look at that cake I just made. You know, it's amazing when it's not amazing by anyone's standards. Then you have received the same dopamine hit that might take someone 12 cakes to master to look at it and go, perfect, and then they get the dopamine hit. You can get that dopamine hit by deciding your cake is. Amazing. So why would you put in all of the extra work, you know, to actually achieve it unless you're waiting on other people's validation? And that's where it gets into murky water. So you know, you need your own validation. I. To be content, to be happy.

Everything else is just opinion and everybody has an opinion, so you will never get them all to match ever, and you might achieve it for a week or two and then something will happen and you'll no longer be flavored of the month and somebody else will be. And you cannot control how other people will validate you. So therefore, the only sensible thing to do is to be your own source. Of validation, and then you're in charge of what's good and what isn't good, which you know, suddenly becomes a whole new ball game.

**Mandy:** You are a person who has reinvented herself many, many, many, many, many, many times. Tell us, give us a buffet of those reinventions.

**Donna:** I mean, it's a sort of running joke amongst my friends and family that, you know, I've had a million lives. So I was a singer from a very young age. Um, I, I sang in bands. I sang Cary, then I traveled on cruise ships singing, and then I became a part of a show band and went on tour. And then I wrote my own album and I went into a new era of music, which was songwriting in trying to be a recording artist, which back at that time was very, very difficult because.

The internet did not exist in any capacity that we have now. You had no social media, so you couldn't just get followers who liked your music and downloaded it. You had to get a deal. You had to get on the radio, and the music industry was terrible at that time. It was a really toxic environment and it really chewed me up and spat me out in not a healthy way.

I was not well by the end of it. I had to leave my contract with my manager because of contractual reasons, which are all a bit murky for me to discuss. Um, wasn't my fault, but I decided that's it. I think I was 27 and I said, I'm never gonna sing again. Ever. Never, never. I'm done. And I moved into journalism, so I thought, you know, how can I get into journalism?

I don't have a degree, uh, but I really like writing and I write songs and things like that. So I managed to get a job in a magazine that was just starting up, and then I left and I created my own magazine, and then I went abroad and I had, you know. Some magazines over there in a foreign country and Azerbaijan.

And then we came back and we sold the company. We had children, so we thought, what can we do now that would be really family friendly? My husband was in tv, so we decided let's buy a children's play center, you know, the big ball pools where the kids go and run around. And so we did that for, you know, a long time. And in between all of that, I mean, there have been. About 10 or 12 other many lives that I have lived. But I would it, you know, it would go on for far too long, but I've always been for somebody who gets afraid of a lot of things. I've never been afraid of change. In fact, I've always craved change because it makes sense to me that you have to evolve constantly, and it's very difficult to evolve if you stay in the same environment and you don't change.

Your environment every day and what you're doing every day. So it would make sense to me that if I want to evolve into a better version of myself, let's change the job. Let's change the house, let's change the country. So whilst other people seemed to be quite shocked by, I can't believe you're moving country again, or you know, 'cause we lived in Spain for a while too, and then England, then Scotland.

But it's always made sense to me that we're not meant to stay the same. As women as men. So why not then help you change more by changing everything around you as well, which has been really fun, but can sometimes be terrifying along the way because you are ripping away all your comfort zones, but it also forces you to fly.

**Mandy:** Yes. And this. Sounds like the wisdom of a almost 50-year-old woman, if you're okay to go back into the mess of some of those iterations of you, and it sounds like you had an, a robust appetite for this anyway, but those pre choice, those pre-decision moments, like the, the run up to that, this is where I actually, from my own experience, I moved to this, I'm Canadian. I moved to this country and decided I was going to pursue a doctorate in history. That was my passion. That was what I wanted to do. I was the first woman in my family ever to go to university. So I'm like, I'm gonna be good at this. I'm gonna effort my way through this. And as I was going through it, I realized like things got super complicated and I was like, I'm falling out of love with this.

And there was this sunk cost. I didn't know to call it that at the time, but this sunk cost of, Ugh, I've come this far. Yes, and I've pursued this, this far, this sunk cost fallacy. And I remember having those moments of. That knowing, bubbling up from my gut, you need to go, you know that slighty sense. Yeah.

Yeah. And it's terrifying to be in that moment when you've gone down the garden path. Its, and this is a direction, air quotes you should be taking and the money and the support and the sunk cost and the direction and everything that has had to happen to bring you to that place. Does that, you're nodding that, does that resonate for you too?

**Donna:** Completely. I mean, I was. Sort of a perfect student at school. So, you know, if there was a test, I had to get a plus. I wasn't happy with 95%. You know, that was not good enough for me. So by the time I went straight into university, because I had such great results, I could go to any university that I wanted to, but I had not stopped to allow myself to grow.

Whilst I was hammering at these grades and hammering at being the best at everything that I got to university, I, I didn't have my network around me. And I suddenly realized, I can't do this. I can't cope with this. This is not school. The schedule is not the same. There's two lessons in a day, and they're four hours apart. What do I do with that four hours? Where do I go? You know? And I spiraled and I completely spiraled into what I see now as the first of many. Breakdowns. Um. And instead of telling people about it and saying, this is what's happening, can I have some help? I waited until I was at rock bottom and I fled university in the middle of the night.

I left all of my stuff and my dad still says to me, to this day, my stereo, I gave you my best stereo to take to the wholesale resident, and you just left it. And I can see that pattern over the years. I did it several times before I realized you can change your life without running away in the middle of the night and letting it all crash down.

You know, because I didn't wanna face people saying, well, what about the sunk costs? Well, what about this? I didn't want anybody to put me off. You know what? My instincts were screaming at me. I need to get out, but I didn't know a healthier way of achieving the same objective. I've learned it over time that you are allowed to disappoint people.

You are allowed to change your track. You know, if there is something you owe them. Financially or time-wise, you will pay that back to them. In many ways, when you are in a great place and you're, you, you know you're functioning in your, your whole self again, you will be able to help that person somehow and, you know, make up for any disappointment you might have caused them, although it's not particularly your responsibility. So I've learned over the decades. That there are far healthier ways to rip off the band-aids and make a change without hurting people in the process. Or confusing people or letting people down. Letting yourself down because when you leave something like that, you leave it in a, you know, in a cloud of violence and you know, it's.

Then the fallout is horrific. Um, so I can totally relate to that feeling of, I've started this now I better carry on. But the voice inside you is so much louder. It says that if you don't go, you will run away in the middle of the night. If you don't go properly and you know healthily, you're going to do that thing again where you hit the wall and you can't take it another day.

And some people can take it and I don't know what's better because then they might. Spend 10, 10 more years doing it, you know? Whereas the person who sort of breaks down, it's not nice at the time, but at least you're out, you know, you can, you can pick it back up and, and, and get the passion from it and move on. So I, you know, I don't know what's better, but there are definitely, there's definitely a middle ground between the two.

**Mandy:** I am extra thorough about my mistakes. I make them quite a few times just to be. To be. Yeah. It's still a mistake this time.

**Donna:** Oh yeah. Definitely a mistake. But it can be the same thing, even in romantic relationships or in friendships that maybe feel like more like. This is not what it used to be, or it doesn't feel good. I think your pattern of getting to that place where you can't take it anymore and you have to run away in the middle of the night. Yeah. I think my pattern has just to be, just push down your knowing, push down your needs and just continue because you don't wanna disappoint. You don't wanna rock the boat. You don't, and they're both so damaging.

**Mandy:** They are. They are. And I know one thing I know for sure, I've said this pre in other podcasts, that emotions. Must be felt. That spidey sense must be felt because if you push that stuff down, it's like putting emotional Spanx on it. That stuff bulges out somewhere else.

**Donna:** Yeah, it's gonna, it's not going away.

**Mandy:** Yeah, it's not, it's not going away. So you learned how not to run away in the night. What was another reinvention that allowed you to peel off another layer?

**Donna:** Well, I mean, obviously leaving the music industry and trying to decide what I'm going to do now, I realized I could not survive in such a cutthroat world.

You know, I was trying to become a record artist around the same time that Britney Spears was huge, and they were telling me to lie about my age. I was 25, you know, and you know, I was getting thinner and thinner and thinner to the point where they were saying We can't. Showcase you until you put some weight on. But then I didn't know how to do that because I was locked in an eating disorder and you know, it, it got to the point where you are, you are, you're gonna die here. I've been in that place before as a teenager as well, so I recognized that I was wasting away. And that that needed to be addressed. So that was the survival of the self over my career at that point.

And then when I did go away and my mom actually for the second time sort of took me away and helped me heal and get back into a space where the eating disorder didn't have control over me anymore, I then had to come back into life and go, okay, now I'm 27. What? What do I do? What's my job? What's my career?

You know, what can I cope with? And. You know, there was still that passion to do something really creative. I knew I still wanted to do something creative, so then I thought, well, okay, maybe I could, you know, be a journalist or maybe I could write magazines. It can't be that difficult. And I remember it sort of manifest in this job that came to me out of nowhere.

And it was to be assistant editor of a brand new magazine, uh, sorry, editor, the, the, there was a full editor, but in another country. So I would be the editor of that. Country magazine, the whole of the uk. And um, I remember going home to my flatmate and saying, right, I got the job. Now I think I should get a computer.

And if you were gonna start a magazine, what would you do? And made it up, you know, and just came up with all these ideas. So that was a terrifying reinvention. And I definitely, you know, it took me a couple of years to become very good at it. I made a lot of mistakes in the beginning, but I tried really hard and you know, I used all of my passion and my skills that I had to really put a, our effort in, but in a really good way, you know, in a really sort of, this is joyful way. Um, I managed to make it work and then of course got to the point in my forties where we had had our kids and they were, you know, not babies anymore, and we had this children's play center and the years were ticking on, we were maybe year five, and I just thought to myself I can't keep doing this.

**Mandy:** How did you know?

**Donna:** Like take us 'cause I was depressed. I was depressed and I was ill again, and I was focusing on my eating, and all of the old things that were coming back in were telling me, knock, knock, knock, knock, knock. Not good for you. This, you, you're, you're dying. You're, you're, you're wilting away.

You need to water your soil. You know, you need to. Do something, um, that brings you some creativity. 'cause that's the water on my soil is the creativity. It's the, it's the taking a blank page and filling it. It's the, you know, there was nothing before and now there's something that's what. That's what makes me come alive is to just go, I wanna, you know, I wanna fill this with feelings and thoughts, this blank space.

But how to do that when you're in your mid forties and you've got young kids and I, I had no financial freedom because my husband and I were running the business together and you, I, you know, I couldn't take money out of that to put into a new project 'cause we needed it. And so you can feel quite trapped.

In these situations. And I just remember thinking, you know, maybe if I magic it up again, I can create something out of nothing. Maybe I can go online and create a social media page and build a following and suddenly have something grow, you know, from nothing. And maybe the will to do it alone will be enough.

And maybe it's this time, it's not about sort of. Creating something that everybody wants to buy, but more talking about why we get in these situations and why women feel like this and why life is difficult when this

happens, and how we can help you maybe, if I'm honest this time, and don't mask it and pretend to be perfect and glossy magazines and you know, beautiful music and all of that, you know?

Oh. She must be having a wonderful time in her life because she's on stage and she's singing. Therefore she's glamorous and life is good, and we know that's not true. So I thought maybe, if I'm honest, everybody else will be honest and something will grow. Um. But it wasn't that clear cut mandate. It wasn't like, you know, I had a real plan.

It was more of an instinctive, if I keep showing up here every day on social media, something will come, something will come, something will come. And that belief and the need, you know, for something was enough to, um. Everything just sort of serendipitously fell into place. And before I knew it, I was writing poetry, which is not, was not a plan, and it's not something I've intentionally done before.

I was a songwriter. I wrote poems when I was young in my diary. But I never ever, not only did I not think poetry was a job because who, nobody actually goes on when I grow up. I'd like to be a poet. I think maybe they do now. Um,

**Mandy:** I hope they do. I hope they do.

**Donna:** It's changed the last five years. Poetry has changed more than it's ever changed in the, in the history of recorded events, you know, in terms of literature and this, these are what they say in the, in the papers and so on.

Poetry has really shifted. It's become more popular now than ever since time began, you know, since poetry began to be published, um, which is a wonderful thing. So the rest of it was very organic, but I remember. The need, the want, the desire, but also the desire this time to do it as me, because I'm getting on a bit now and I can't keep up this exhaustive pretense of being perfect 'cause I'm anything but perfect.

And I really felt like if people knew how much I struggled, they wouldn't respect me in the same way. But then the instinct was telling me, I don't think you're giving everybody enough credit. I. You know, I think it's you that thinks that, so let's try it and see. And the more you unravel, the more people around you unravel.

It's contagious, you know, we're unraveling now, but in a good way because we suddenly all feel better and lighter and more worthy and accepted, and we're not afraid anymore to admit that. I've got this really weird personality quirk that I don't tell anyone about, and now we know they're the favorite things about us.

All my friends. My favorite things about them. When I think about them and my heart expands, it's those little quirks that make me inwardly smile. You know, the things about them that are so very them and no one else. They're the best bits. Don't you think?

**Mandy:** I absolutely agree, and I think for me, this started to kick off reading the work of Brene Brown, where she talked about vulnerability and it really got me thinking at the time of, it's true.

I really value those quirks and idiosyncrasies and eccentricities and you know, just the. You see somebody who you love doing the thing that only they do. Like I read magazines back to front and I remember somebody saying like, why do you do that? That's so weird. And I, it just never even occurred to me that I did it.

They pointed it out to my attention and I started to think, what are those things in other people that I absolutely love that it's just the way they say a word or it so cute

**Donna:** and my, I have a friend who has to read the end of the book first. Because she gets so heartbroken that she needs to know what she's preparing herself for and she cannot read the rest of the book until she knows how, how heartbroken she's gonna be at the end or not.

And you know, that to me is just brilliant. You know, that's just so adorable.

**Mandy:** And these are the things that we can fall in love with about other people, like even about our partners, or our children, or our pets, even our girlfriends. It's these things, these peculiar. Offbeat eccentric ways of doing things. Like I love when you go into a shop and I see something orange. One of my best



friends, Shelly, her color is orange. And yeah, I'm even dressed in orange today. Uh, channeling her feisty spirit. And I, you know, you see something, you think, oh, she would love that. And I think once we really allow ourselves to know a person.

**Donna:** Yeah.

**Mandy:** And to, and to be known.

**Donna:** Yes, yes. You know, I, I masked my whole entire life and I didn't know it was masking. I thought everybody was doing it, and I think a lot of people were. Um, but then I would come across these people on my travels to different countries, and there would always be somebody who was exactly themselves and who was not mortified to do things that I would be mortified to do things.

And again, with that people watching thing, I studied them. How are you able to be like that? It's not a lack of self-respect, it's not a lack of standards. It's something far more wonderful than that. It's the ability to just be who you are in that moment and accept it, that it's okay that, yeah, you might not wanna do that again, but you're not gonna beat yourself up for a week for doing it.

As I would have. So it's just fascinating to me that these people, they show up and they are anomalies. I think they're, they're, they're, you know, there's not many of them. And every crowd of 20 people, you might get one who naturally has, has that. And everybody else is sort of watching everybody else and seeing what the vibe is.

And I'll match their vibe and I'll match your vibe. And then there's always one person who is just their own vibe and. That was fascinating for me to watch them and think, how, how do you do that? How do you trust that you are enough? How do you decide that you're gonna be enough? And it is literally is the decision I. To be enough.

**Mandy:** Last week I was in Pasadena at the Nassau Jet Propulsion Labs and I was full on geek. I was so excited to be in this place. And what one of the things that the rocket scientist was telling us about is the, a disproportionate amount of energy is required to get a craft off the ground. So a bulk of the fuel that is required is just to get the darn thing off the tarmac and then bits fall away.

**Donna:** Yeah. And then there is a, a connective power that will support itself and perpetuates and you're safe. You know, once you've got that, everything takes that superhuman effort. To begin to, and, and you do lose bits of yourself and you have to be prepared to, to lose that, you know, the collateral damage. Um, it was actually, it's Joe Dispenza that I've been, you know, I'm going on his retreat at the end of April in Cancun, which I'm very excited about.

So, you know, he takes you through all of the physics and the, you know, the way energy interacts with, with itself and the body and how the mind creates. That, and it's very similar analogies, but you can actually fully take them back to what is going on within your body right now, right this minute, and how it's corresponding to every single thing that you do.

And say even what we are doing now, we're chemically instructing our bodies. You know, and that's having a biological impact. So these things I, I really wish we were taught more about how the thinking and perspective is. Everything. There is nothing else without it. You know, if your thoughts aren't right, if your perspective isn't right, you are not right.

Nothing is right. And yes, you can drag yourself around like that for years, but you know, you are losing that quality of life. You're losing that ability to look around and be present. You're complete a series of programs that are hardwired. Um, I wish

**Mandy:** we would talk more about it. Well, that's why we're here of thinking through, even through these big transitions, how bits of ourselves fall away.

Bits of our identity fall away. Bits of belief systems fall away as we become more and more who we really are before we f you know, we learned how to fit in. Coming back to Brene Brown, like the I, for me, a goal is true belonging as opposed to fitting in and realizing that all. And realizing that that vulnerability piece also

applies to me, that it's also my quirks and eccentricities and yours are actually one of the true things that it's, it's the key that turns belonging.

Yeah, of course. When we're not trying to manage ourselves and, and

**Donna:** what is belonging? Because I think people look around for places that fit them and families that fit them, and friendship groups that fit them. And you know, it's not the same thing fitting in and belonging at the, the only way you can belong is literally to yourself.

And then everywhere you go is home. Yes, everywhere you go and your you, you carry your bubble, your vibe, your energy is your safe place. You know, you can take that with you everywhere you go. And once that sort of bubble, that safe place is love, which it has to be, that's the ultimate, you know, it's the only reason then it connects so more beau, so much more beautifully to other people as well as yourself and attracts, you know, the right kind to you.

But I think the only way you can belong is to yourself.

**Mandy:** And I think it's taking the wisdom of the transitions. I mean, I am. Just completing maybe the biggest transition of EV I've ever gone through. Okay. Maybe aside from puberty. Okay. Is coming out the other end of menopause. Yeah. And all of the things that are falling away, like I re I'm not available for being over responsible anymore.

Yeah. Mm-hmm. I'm no longer available for managing. You know, or compressing myself living in a state of compression to keep the peace. I'm no longer available for keeping my own needs. Down. Yeah. And being a good girl and mm-hmm. Being pleasant and cute and well behaved at all times. There is something like, there's a lot of stuff falling off the proverbial nassau rocket at this massive transition Yeah and I thought, why do we have to wait to get into our fifties for this stuff to happen? But maybe it's a series of those small pivots and decisions that happen through all those decisions that we make along the way.

**Donna:** Yeah, and I think, I think at the younger generation, we'll get there a bit quicker than we did because there's so much more talking being done.

And really it's the sharing the love lives in the sharing the ugly truths. Because if you share your ugly truth, you are handing someone else the solutions to what they are facing. Because we kept them all hidden. All these treasure maps out of misery. We didn't wanna talk about it. So we kept them hidden.

And now we're going, do you know what? I was in a terrible marriage and you know, dah, dah, dah, dah. And you've just handed somebody else a plan should they need it or they can apply that to something else that you know they're facing. So I think, 'cause we are talking so much as a generation, when they get to certain things that will be remembered, that will have, you know, they'll have taken that on board or they, it's just bio osmosis.

I don't even know. And there is so much more awareness now. That I think they'll get to this point slightly sooner than we will, but it's also chemical, it's also hormonal, and it's also mother nature's. Time plan for us. She gets you to your midlife and you know, and then she tweaks around with your hormones again and goes, okay, over to you.

Now this bit's for you, and I genuinely think that's what it's, you've got your body clock ticking and whatever you decide to do with that, or whether you can or can't is a whole different thing, but you still get the hormones. In the same way. So you still get the same moods and the same, you know, you're in the same chapter.

And I do think that, that the sort of, the menopause delivers as a bit of a off you go now, you know you can do this bit for you. Um, almost like a waken up, you know, it's like a, they call it, what do they call it, a second spring? But I quite like to call it autumn, because I love autumn because leaves are falling away and we're not afraid to be bare.

So to me it feels like autumn and then winter will be, you know, your, your lovely final stage. But it's empowering. It's really empowering when other women turn around and say, this is what I'm no longer



doing. This is what I, you know, and again, with the contagion, it passes along and we all go, Ooh, yeah, I don't wanna do that either. And you know, there's a permission.

**Mandy:** It's wonderful letting things fall away during transition points. Also has some other interesting things that happen as a result. One is like realizing I've realized that I'm so much stronger than I thought I was and big life things can happen. Something completely unexpected can take your knees out.

And again, I rise. Yeah. Is that something that you've discovered too?

**Donna:** Completely, absolutely. And, but for me it's been quite intentional and I am quite, uh, I'm an overthinker. I'm a, a worrier. I'm an over, over, over, always have been. So I've had to pull all that back. I see it like a mixing desk, you know, with the sliders and the levels and the sliders.

So I like to set my brain every day. And I decide what volume is going up and what volume is coming down. And that sort of visual analogy for me has worked beautifully. 'cause if I wanna turn down the noise of the outside world, I'll turn it down. If I wanna turn up my creativity, I'll turn up my creativity.

I wanna turn down my inner critic, write down all the way. Mm-hmm. And then I'm going to turn up that lovely little voice that lives inside me that says, oh, you're so good at this. Look at you love, not. So I, I like to adjust, you know, my mixing levels every day and, and decide what I'm gonna be less of and what I'm gonna be more of.

So I think for me it was very intentional. You know, I, I, I had these thoughts that this is what I would do, that this is what, what I was gonna aim for.

**Mandy:** The other thing that emerges, I think when we use our mixing boards and we decide it's gonna be less inner critic now in this season of my life, because I've learned through all those transitions that that's doesn't serve me or the situation.

And I love the idea of turning up the, the creativity. I have another dial that I wanna offer up to the mix. I'm obsessing and overthinking because we have that in common about the concept of life force. Life force was my word for 2024 and we're, we're not quite done. So we're continuing, we're continuing into 2025 and I'm really thinking deeply about when we get to this place where things fall away after we've figured out how resilient we are, different transitions have.

You know, just as you said, the leaves falling and you get to a state of being as bare as maybe you've ever been since being a baby, I suppose. But different. Same, but different. What is able to emerge from that place intentionally and this concept of life force? It's. I don't know if it's an energy. I'm at the early stages of exploring this, but it, for me, for anybody not seeing the video, it's kind of like an energy that snakes up through the body of somebody who's got humility, somebody who's got mastery of something, somebody who's unapologetically stepping into this version of themselves. Somebody who is turned. On by their life and what they're creating. It's a way of walking through the world that I think does involve moving those dials intentionally to get out of just the, the gray day to day and turning up the dial on that life force and, and intentionally moving through life in that way. That feels so delicious. 'cause what's the point of letting things fall away? What are we gonna do with it? That's what I'm interested in.

**Donna:** Well, I mean, to me, you've, you've just described what it is to be easily pleased. You've turned up all your senses to the point that you can become delighted by a sunrise, not just, that's a lovely sunrise.

It can delight you to the point where you're tingling and you've got the little goosebumps or you know, little serendipities absolutely enthrall you. The mysticism of it, you know the consciousness. You're aware of all of the energy that everything in the garden has, that everybody around you has. That you can watch a video on your phone that has a million likes because it's a baby hearing for the first time, and you know that a million people have had that same rush of utter love through their bodies. That shook them just like you have in that, you know? And that in itself is. It's so exciting is it's the meaning of it all, isn't it? It's it's consciousness. It's the energy that connects us. And you know, if we took everything away, all of the things on the earth away, the energy of each and every person and thing would still be there.

You can't get rid of energy. It never leaves. It stays here. So that in itself, to me is the life force, you know, and the life force of people that have gone is still here. Because that energy, you can't buddy it. You can, you know, you can't. Disperse it into the sea, the energy remains here. So, you know, there's all sorts of channel in that energy of ancestors and people you know, that you've known and what they would love to see happening in this generation.

And they, I always think about, you know, imagine what my great granny would think about what I'm doing now or what my kids have got access to, or, you know, how wonderful this life has become. And to me, that is life force, you know, and that is. Becoming easily and pleased, and you're not just easily pleased, you're blissful, you know, you're absolutely brimming with joy.

**Mandy:** Um, it's magnetic, isn't it?

**Donna:** It's magnetic and it's magnetic. Quite literally.

**Mandy:** Help us to bridge that place of where you were not feeling that sure of yourself and maybe not feeling enough all the time. And now it feels like you're in this place of brimming with joy. What role did your poetry play?

**Donna:** It was the whole thing. And you know, I am not a joyful person. I'm not a positive thinker.

I am not a happy person. I run very dark. So I have always catastrophized my entire life. If there is a worst case scenario, I've written 12 possible, you know, ways that that could change and become even worse. So it again, the question that you asked me earlier, I made a decision mid forties to intentionally change the way that I walked through the world, the way that I thought about the world, what I needed to feel joyful, what I needed to feel authentic, what I needed to feel like I'd achieved.

I made a big decision, probably wasn't aware I was doing it at the time. It's one of those decisions that's more. I'm desperate. You know, I need more. I need more. I know there is more. My instincts are telling me that there is more you can do less. And feel more of the right things, and you can feel a lot less of these horrible things that are, you know, bringing you down.

So I changed everything and my poet eye is very melancholic, you know, so I could write you a heartbreak song or a grief poem, you know, in an instant all the way through my life. But turning it the other way around took a bit of intention for me, you know, and I went outside and I thought, right, these people who are positive thinkers and who are happy people, what are they saying that I'm not?

And you know, I experimented with absolutely everything until it became, you know, until it became part of Till, because a belief is only a thought that you repeat so many times. It becomes hardwired. Therefore, you can hardwire any thought until a belief and nobody knows the truth. We're not gonna find it out in this lifetime.

So if something feels magical to you or feels you feel a connection to it. Go for it. Believe it. Absorb yourself in it. Life is short. You know, if it's bringing, if it's bringing positive energy to you and the people around you and making you a nicer person to love or to know, or, or you just feel happier with your world, then there is no bad side to that.

You are not hurting anybody. You can't possibly so believe it. Go for it, do it. So it has all been very, very intentional and it works. I can actually say, I used to say I'm not a morning person. I used to say, oh no, I'm an overthinker. Oh no, I'm, I'm, I'm an anxious person. I'm all of these things. And actually now I, I still say that I run dark, but I don't know if I do anymore.

You know? I think that's gonna be the version of me now. That is an old version of me and I'm moving into a different one, and it's

**Mandy:** fascinating. It's these transitions that also show us how much range we have. Like when we, when we hit a wall or we get to this place of knowing I can't do this anymore. It feels like an ending. And it does run dark quite often, but also it's that when we find our way through it, that's when there's so much post. Catastrophizing or post darkness or post whatever, learning on the other side of that, and then the bits fall

away, and then there's new green shoots all the time. So maybe there is a running dark, but your range has increased. You also run white, hot, bright, right? I mean, on the other hand and, and super sunny, it's like being able to play all the keys of the piano.

**Donna:** But I wasn't for a very, very long time. I had a really limited range. You know, I could feel happiness and I could feel joy, and I could feel peace for moments at time, but I couldn't sustain them for any longer.

My natural state of being was suffering, you know, constantly needed more, constantly feeling like I had a hole to fill. You know, people say that, and that resonated with me for my whole entire life. But I can't see it anymore. It's not there anymore. And that was about changing what, what, what I got my happiness from, and making it much easier to get every single day if you can.

If you can reap the rewards of what's around you every single day, then your source, I. Is constant, you know, and bountiful. But if you need big wins to get yours, you know, they're not, it's not bountiful, it's not constant. You're constantly chasing, chasing, chasing. And then you get it and then you go, yay.

And then two weeks later you go, all right, well now it has to be even bigger next time, because I've done that. And you know, that is. A merry-go-round that never stops. I stepped off that years and years ago, and now if I get a number one or something like that, it's wonderful. I celebrate it for the people who shared their ugly truths with me and the people who've used my books as a way of opening up hard conversations or helping someone who really needed it and they didn't have the words, so they thought, I'll use this book.

That's why I celebrate it, because of the every single person's. Journey every time they bought that book, especially if they gifted it, they were given a little piece of themselves. Therefore, it needs to be respected. That is a huge thing. You know, that's a collective, but I don't celebrate it in a way that like, woo-hoo, look at me go. Or, you know, flying high and far more likely to get that kinda feeling from something really small these days. You know, from a, a listening to a friend for an hour and knowing. That I did the listening really well and I didn't interrupt a hundred times and give advice. I just listened. 'cause I knew that's what they needed. And, you know, I can congratulate myself for things like that and feel, you know, well done. You, you know, you're, you're, you've achieved something there that was a proper interaction. Human to human, the kind it will be remembered, the kind that matters, the kind that changes things and all of this sort of shallow stuff.

That we kind of put all of our importance on. It's not important at all. It's absolutely not important, important. Very few of these things are important, so it's, it's constantly prioritizing what's important and what isn't important, and what should bring you joy and what you know. What is just a little cherry on a little cake that you don't really need, but Oh yeah, I'll have that.

Thank you very much. Yum. Yum. You know, that's all that the importance it should hold. Shouldn't use the word should, but that's the way that I've been doing it the last couple of years, and it's working absolutely brilliantly for me because the pressure is not there to achieve, and I get to enjoy every single stage, whether it's, you know, small or big.

If I get an email from somebody saying, you know, oh. Thank you for this because I gave it to my friend and she did this and dah, dah, dah, dah. And I can't tell you what that meant in the moment. And now we're doing this and, you know, that goes in and that becomes like a little building block in this thing.

And that stays, I keep that one, I screenshot it in my mind and keep it for, you know, days when things feel a bit dark, um, and all of the other stuff just comes in and let it go.

**Mandy:** I think there's something I'm taking away from this conversation about really using my writer's eye, my poet's eye, to look at things and you know, to increase the range of how we look at what matters.

Because the irony is you're living from this place and you are, you're a bestseller. That's the irony.

**Donna:** And the irony is that I, I, I let go of everything. In 2020, my son was diagnosed and we sort of hit a crisis point as a family. He was diagnosed with autism and he was in crisis. The world locked down. I did one of my I can't do this anymore. This is, I need more and I'm going home. So we came home to Scotland,

my husband's English, we moved everything, you know, we left, we sold our business even though it was in lockdown and nobody wants to go to a children's place center in lockdown. So pretty much just shut. Um, we had nothing.

We had no jobs. You know, we had no house. We lived with my parents. We had no schools for the boys. We couldn't sort of get to school because everything was shut. It was a really scary bareback, leaves falling away. What on earth happened to my beautiful, wonderful life? Because on the outside her life looked.

Perfect. But it wasn't perfect. We were running too fast and my son was suffering and we didn't notice he was 11 and he was in a school that really pushed the kids and pushed the kids and they were winning awards and winning awards. And my instincts were telling me, this is not how you parent. You don't care about this. But I was running along with the crowd and I kneaded out and I kn out and saw where. Lockdown happened and I saw it as a, you know, a, a sign now is the time if you're gonna do it. And so that is when success came knocking at my door when I was living in my mom and dad's house. And, you know, I was trying to print out my first book on my dad's printer, and he's shouting to me, what are you doing with my printer?

I'm on a monthly program that only accounts for a hundred pages and now I'm gonna have to change it. And I'm like, trust me, it's fine. I'll sort it for you. And you know, because I think that once you do reorder that and you do change the way that you look at the world and you, you are brave enough to say, you know, I see a better way and I'm going to go for it, you attract then.

Because you're coming from the source. That is true in a way, and nothing's ever that simple or black and white. It feels terrifying at the time. There are moments where you think, we've done this wrong. I regret this, but, but the belief that there's that, that you trust the knowing. Of, you know, what could be better is enough to drive you through.

And so it wasn't until I left the big city where I had contacts and everything was easy, and I came to the middle of nowhere and I'm in the countryside, you know? And now, um, then people suddenly call in a couple of years later and say, oh, fly in London, fly in. You can be anywhere in the world. You can be living any way you like.

And if you believe enough in what you're doing. You can get it out there. We've got that technology now. It makes everything so fair for people and you know, that is exciting. Because it allows us to be, uh, you know, I'm looking out my window now at my beautiful garden and you know, there's a breeze blowing in and, you know, I'm at home and my kids will be home soon and my pets are here and people think I live this busy life because some pictures, you know, I'm in London and some pictures I'm here.

But the reality is mostly I'm home and I'm writing, you know, lovely poems in my lovely space and getting my little joys from the little things.

**Mandy:** What's something you have recently said enough to and felt better for? It.

**Donna:** It's, it's definitely the, the judging myself still, you know, whenever I come out.

**Mandy:** Thank you for saying that.

**Donna:** Thank you for, coming outta my safe environment into a new environment. I might even have been invited there and I still feel like an imposter walking in the doors. I know now that everyone does, even the people who you perceive to be at the top, if you. Talk to them, especially women, you know, get into the bathroom with a few women and you're straight into, through the layers of small talk and straight into the, you know, oh my God, I, I don't like what I'm wearing today.

And I felt like, oh, and I was feeling really scared to meet you, and I was feeling scared to meet you. And, you know, and we're all exactly the same. Underneath it all change a few variables. On the outside, we feel the same things, but I am, I am exhausted judging myself and and doing the whole what if you're not good enough? And then coming out and doing the, I don't think you were good enough. I don't think you should have said that. Maybe you could have been a bit more, and I'm in a place now where I can cut that straight

off at the root. You know, I'm not even gonna give you air. You've no oxygen. I'm not even doing it. And there's a little part of me that goes, can't we just have one quick look at all the silly things you said?

Just one, just so we know, so that when the podcast comes out, you don't go, ah. And I say, no. You know, I'm not doing it. I'm not reviewing it in that capacity. I went there with an open heart. You know, I, I, I, I came as the version of myself that I am right now, and that's enough. And so I, I am absolutely done with judging myself and judging the way that I'm aging is another big one.

You know, constantly judging the way that, should I be aging like this? Should I be doing better? Should I be trying harder not to get older? Should I be getting older? Really getting older so that other people feel inspired to get older? It's not my responsibility and it's not even something that I should have to think about.

We're getting older every minute of every single day and that's it. You know, you shouldn't have to be thinking about how am I getting older? I. That should not be a concern. We've got so many things to worry about, so yeah, that's something I'm putting my foot down on as well.

**Mandy:** Thank you. I feel like I have had the most delicious, nourishing meal.

This has been an absolute delight. You are a delight. Thank you for taking the time. Oh, you're a delight.

**Donna:** Thank you for having me. It's been a joy, A pleasure. Mm,

**Mandy:** Hopefully a little bit, something different. I, I, it was really fun going in this direction with you.

**Donna:** I enjoyed it too. It's a bit like therapy.

It just kinda sorts all the things that you know, you're thinking, but when somebody asks you and you say it out loud, you're setting an intention to the universe, then you're, you're stitching a little tapestry, you know, and saying, this is, make it so, so, yeah.

**Mandy:** Thank you. Make it so. If Donna's words stirred something in you, a letting go, a softening, a quiet yes. I hope you will carry that with you today. Maybe there's a reinvention gently unfolding in your own life too, if you enjoyed this conversation. Please share it with somebody who needs it, and thank you so much for doing that.

All of Donna's details are in the show notes and do deep dive into her delicious words. I just finished to the women and like her other books, it is full of delights. Until next time, here's to noticing the small things to being easily pleased and to deciding that you are already enough.