

Growth Through Adversity | Sanity Check

I do think adversity forces us to look inward in a way that being comfortable just doesn't. It challenges our limits and through that discomfort we're pushed to make changes or face parts of ourselves that we might otherwise avoid. Hi and welcome to You Keep Me Seen.

I'm Aileen. And I'm Julie. And we're two friends navigating life's ups and downs together from opposite sides of the world.

Hi and welcome back to You Keep Me Seen. Hi, how are you? I'm great, Julie. How are you? Yeah, I'm pretty good.

Early morning for me. But really nice to be doing another quick insight. Love our topic.

I think it's a great topic, this one, and something we both feel like we've been through. But basically we're bringing you a quick insight today into our thoughts on something that we focus on a lot and talk about all the time. It's personal growth, but it's a specific aspect of that today.

And that's the type of growth that comes from adversity. So it's those difficult, painful moments that end up shaping who we are. Although, as we both always say, we can never see it at the time.

Definitely known a few of those. It is such a powerful topic. So often people say that the most challenging times are the ones that help us grow the most.

But what does that actually mean? And why do we have to go through such hardship to evolve? Can't we just grow in peace, please? If only. I know, it would be nice, actually, because we do really feel like we've been through so many lows, I think. And it never feels great.

But it is a valid question. If we didn't have any of that trauma or drama, would we not have important growths? Or would we miss something essential if we didn't face these difficulties? And so that's pretty much what we're going to unpack today, isn't it? Yeah, it is a really good question, isn't it? But what exactly is it? What is growth through adversity? And I think for us, it's been when we've gone through a really tough moment in our lives, whether it's heartbreak or job loss or something else really disappointing or painful. And somehow, either while in the situation or afterwards, we found a new strength or even parts of ourselves we didn't know existed.

And I know in my own case, my dad died when I was 31. And that loss was and still is the biggest heartbreak of my life so far. It came as such a shock because he'd been so healthy.

To try and explain that pain, it's really difficult because it's like when you see a cartoon, and they always have this heartbreak and it goes physically through the middle. It feels like that. It felt like my heart had been ripped wide open.

And it just felt it was far too soon. And I did so much grieving. And when I look back as hard as it was to come to terms with it all, I feel like he gave me a gift, a gift of being much more authentic and more understanding of people.

And so it changed me. I didn't think at the time, but I could look back and see it like that now. Yeah, you do always say that to me because I didn't know you prior to that.

But you say how much more alpha you were before your dad passed. So completely transformative for you. And I do think adversity, it forces us to look inward in a way that being comfortable just doesn't.

It challenges our limits. And through that discomfort, we're pushed to make changes or face parts of ourselves that we might otherwise avoid. I think for me, it was sort of similar moving back to Australia was a massive one.

I mean, there've been many, but that's sort of a very recent thing, which doesn't sound traumatic, but I'd been away 18 years in total, and I just never wanted to come back. I mean, I did everything not to come back. I had visa issues.

I had all sorts of things, but I never really defined why I just avoided living here. And so when we came back for a two year stint, it was meant to be with you and the kids thinking this will be great. We'll just give the kids time down there and your family.

I had to face a lot of baggage, which meant the first few years, as you know, of living here were awful. I was really depressed, anxious, everything. It was a really, really tough couple of years.

And then we had health challenges in there and all sorts of things came piling in. But looking back, that resulted in so much growth for me. It was like being in a pressure cooker.

And what that forced me to look at was where I pegged my self-worth, my identity and fears of things like judgment. It was such a transition for me. Gosh, it was a huge transition for you.

I can remember going through it with you about you moving back and it was so traumatic for you. And you kept saying, because you'd been in Europe for so many

years that you felt like you were going to the back of beyond and you would be somehow isolated from what you'd known. And it's been amazing to see how far you've come because you've gone through a lot of demons.

It's been great because we've been able to talk about all of that as you've gone along. And I'm so glad you've got to where you are now. Sometimes it can feel impossible when you're going through it.

And then looking back, I'm sure now that you feel a lot stronger and more resilient and wiser from going through all that. Yeah, it is incredible if you can look back and look at it in hindsight. And it's sort of like you've gone through this refining process when you go through those hard things.

You also come out clearer about what you truly value and you're more compassionate, I think, to others who struggle. And I've learned that some of the toughest experiences, they've taught me self-respect and boundaries. And eventually you get to those lessons.

I had, for example, a very tough two years dealing with family mental health challenges after COVID. And that meant I depressed pause on everything that I was doing pretty much. As you know, I was editing my book and trying to get back to work.

It was pretty tough for two years, as you know. But when I look back now, that even was an invaluable experience. I gained so much knowledge and so much compassion.

And I've sort of dropped a lot of barriers I had to being myself. But I've also learned to extend to others that compassion. And it feels like it was meant to because it really did fundamentally change my approach to so many things.

It was so hard seeing you go through that. And actually you said that you had to deal with it, but you didn't. You chose to give up writing your book, doing something that you absolutely love because you wanted to take care of everyone else, because that's who you are, because you're such a kind-hearted person.

And to hear you say you've got even more compassion, well, that's just incredible. I love that you have learned those lessons and can look back like that because it was really tough for you and putting your book to the side like that. But something we keep asking ourselves is whether we need trauma to grow and what if we had a life with no big obstacles? I just can't imagine it.

But would we be just as developed or would we be missing out? Yeah, it's a good question, right? Because it feels counterintuitive to think we need to go through these obstacles. And, you know, I do think we can grow without trauma, even just

hardship, but I think it requires intentional effort. For example, you have to push yourself out of your comfort zone in smaller ways or seek out a challenge in order to grow.

But it means we also have to be pretty honest with ourselves about what our comfort zone is. If I look back now, and if I'd stayed living abroad all of those years, and I always felt this angst about moving back, I could have, I guess, proactively confronted that much earlier. And done it in smaller ways and saved myself the years of grief that came when I actually moved back.

I should have taken an honest look at all the reasons I didn't want to move back here. Acknowledged that I pegged myself worth, for example, to achievement, that I had a massive fear of judgment. I could hide from those things if I kept moving around and not living near people that I feared wouldn't accept me, for example.

But it was actually me not accepting myself. And so I think if I'd looked at that earlier, things would have played out differently, or at least a period of acknowledging that would have been much different. It came very dramatic once I was forced to learn, but it would have been a gradual process over the years, perhaps, and a lot calmer.

Maybe you couldn't pinpoint everything about why you didn't want to go back. You were saying this, you were saying that, and then it all became clear and now you faced it. It just wasn't that this was a big part of your journey that you had to go back to face it.

And now look at you, you're thriving and it's lovely. It's like a self-imposed growth, facing something before you're forced to, and things like moving into a new place or back to an old one in your case, or learning a new skill. Even something simple like committing a personal goal or growth can happen through smaller challenges too, but it might be slower or look different.

And I think also it doesn't feel as obviously transformative as say, recovering from a significant setback. So if me coming here felt so dramatic and I could see the growth in a relatively short space of time, not that short. So I think it does happen.

It just doesn't feel as obvious, I suppose, when you do it that way. But I do feel like we don't have to wait for life to knock us down to become better versions of ourselves. I had to come back here in the end to grow in those ways and face that, but I could have, if I'd been honest with myself and actually faced that feeling I always had of not wanting to come back and actually tried to look at it and go, okay, why? Rather than just ignoring it, maybe I could have looked at it sooner, but I just didn't.

It was timing. It's just your life journey, that all fell into place at the right time for you, but you don't see that at the time. It's easy to see in hindsight.

So I think a question that comes up is if you're going through a tough time and how can you find growth within it, even when it hurts? And for myself, it's often about allowing myself to feel whatever comes up. I mean, I'm not always good at that. I might distract myself by having a glass of wine or texting friends or just taking myself away from my thoughts, but I'm learning to feel the feeling more.

And if you need to have a cry or you do have to rant about then you can do it on paper to yourself or send an email to yourself about something that's annoying you or maybe someone that's annoying you, but you don't need to send it to them. You do it for yourself and appreciate the thoughts that you're having. Yeah, that's exactly right.

I think that looking at those emotions and working out what's caused them and actually just getting them out there or feeling them, and you can say, why am I feeling that emotion? Is it something that can be intentionally worked on? Something that's also helped me is being in the situation. If something tough comes up, I really notice it rather than try to get through it. I feel like I can grow in those moments more easily because I can see what the lesson is rather than live trying to get through it and get to the other side of it and just be done with it.

And journaling's helped me a lot too, just putting the thoughts down, jotting them down and finding the patterns in my reactions to things. It helps me to see where I can grow and maybe where I'm holding on a bit too tightly to how things were. And then there's this lovely quote by Alan Watts.

You knew it. It's one of my favorite quotes and it says, to abolish all valleys is to get rid of all mountains. And I think that whenever I'm going through something tough, I always look at that and I think, yeah, okay, there is a discomfort here, but without that, there might not be the ability to get to the highs that we want to get to sometimes.

I agree. It's a beautiful quote. And maybe it's about accepting that growth can be uncomfortable.

I know for myself, it's really been uncomfortable. But with time and we look back, you see the positive changes that have come from it. And I always say to people going through those tough moments, sometimes you just have to sink to the bottom and then rise again like a phoenix.

And I you and I have gone through that so many times. So if you're in a rough patch right now, remember that it's okay to be in process. Growth does not happen overnight.

Yeah, exactly. It's that process, isn't it? And remembering about the phoenix, I think that's a really good one. But also sometimes if you're not in a stage of life without huge challenges, you can also take the time to nurture yourself, be kind, and maybe stretch in small ways because you've got more capacity to stretch when you're in a calm stage because it doesn't have to always be intense.

It can be steady and gentle too. We're only just starting to learn that. I mean, we just went through the big bang and bust constantly.

But yeah, it's those small ways in the calm. Yeah, absolutely. So if you are facing something really hard right now, remember that growth is happening, even if you can't see it yet.

And if things are calm, see it as an invitation to stretch yourself in smaller intentional ways. Yeah, exactly. So we'd love to hear from listeners on this one.

Are there challenges you've faced that have really shaped you? Or how do you grow when life is smooth sailing? Is that something that people try to do consciously? Share your stories with us in our Instagram group, which is Raw and Real, or leave us a voicemail or email hello at youkeepmesane.com. We're here to listen. Oh, thank you for joining us today. Remember no matter where you are in your journey, growth is possible.

Until next time, take care and be kind to yourselves. Bye. Bye.

Thanks so much for joining us. We hope you're feeling more understood, a little less alone, or that something we've discussed resonated with you. And if you have something to share, email us at hello at youkeepmesane.com or message us on socials at [youkeepmesane.pod](https://www.instagram.com/youkeepmesane.pod). Oh, and please remember, we're just two friends sharing our personal experiences and discussing everyday challenges.

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You Keep Me Sane acknowledges the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which part of this podcast episode was filmed. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present.