

#41 – Finding Peace and Purpose – Live from the Bounce Back Stronger Book Launch

Donna Ferris: [00:00:00] Well, thank you all for being here for the Bounce Back Stronger book launch. Here's the book, and I thought I would just start right off talking a little bit about the science of resilience.

Because I think sometimes when you talk about bouncing back stronger, people don't really want to think that they can do it and they think that's impossible. But there's really a science around that. So I thought I'd read a little bit from that part of the book.

“So maybe the thought of bouncing back is too much.

A concept you can't conceive. I'm a skeptic and typically reject things before I accept them. Because of this, I find science helpful in turning resistance into acceptance. This brings us to the scientific research of Dr. Stephen Southwick, a renowned expert in the field of psychology and neuroscience from Yale.

He died in 2022. He worked at the National Center for PTSD of the U. S. Department of [00:01:00] Veterans Affairs and focused primarily on how people become resilient after traumatization. His life's work sheds light on how our brains can not only adapt to difficulty, but can also heal. Where does his research begin?

Neuroplasticity. Which refers to the brain's remarkable ability to adapt and reorganize itself. When we face adversity or trauma our brains can form new neural pathways, enabling us to grow, learn, and ultimately recover. This is called Neuroplasticity.

Not an easy word. Whenever I hear this idea of neural connections, I think of that Star Trek The Next Generation episode, yes, I am a Trekkie, when the artificial intelligence named Data lost one of his closest friends. Although he couldn't actually feel anything, he described losing the person as having a well-worn path that is no longer accessible.

He sorely missed having that routine in his processing completed. Maybe not how you think about loss. But it might be helpful to look at it that way. When

our [00:02:00] relationships are disrupted by loss, our brains are knocked off their usual track. But like a computer, Dr. Southwick found that our brains can rewire themselves.

They are not fixed forever. We can develop new pathways to help us cope. And that is what this book is all about. Identifying ways to reprogram ourselves, to find peace and purpose, No matter what happens.”

So this is just a little bit about the book here. There are quotes in the book that kind of cover all these different items. And I thought maybe we'd kind of go through a few other readings, but maybe I can take a couple of questions if anybody has any questions?

Attendee: Donna?

Donna Ferris: Yeah?

Attendee: This is Joy.

Donna Ferris: How are you?

I was just thinking, what would you say are three takeaways from the book?

That's a great question. I think [00:03:00] my first one is that you already know the answers. It's funny, I just did an interview with Rita Zoe Chin, who wrote a beautiful book called *Let the Tornadoes Come*.

And what she realized through her healing is that she had an instinctive way of knowing exactly what she needed every time. Everybody was telling her what to do. She had severe panic disorder, and the things that everybody said that would work for 95 percent of all people.

She's like, wait a minute, what about me? It doesn't work for me. And she kept coming back to the same kinds of benefits of being outside and being with horses. Which turned out to be a really great way for her to heal. So I think that's a big one. You already know how to heal.

Second, it's important to put in small daily activities towards your healing. So I get up every morning and meditate and I write down the things I'm going to do that day the things that are going to support what I really think is important to do in my life.

And then I do some self-care so that I can be the best person that I can be every minute of the day, which is really, [00:04:00] really hard.

Attendee: See, there's a walnut just fell that was the exclamation point after your sentence there. Just so you know, that was the most important thing.

(Laughter.)

Donna Ferris: And I think the last thing would be connection. I think that we cannot do this alone. We need the help of a higher power and from other people that are in our lives.

We need help from people that have been through the same things that we're trying to get ourselves through. I think connection is not to be forgotten and it's really key to, to any healing. That's was a really great question. Thank you.

There was a couple questions, I think, on the chat.

Attendee: How long did it take to gather the information and then write the book?

Donna Ferris: So I blogged this book. I blogged it in a newsletter, so I will be doing the next book that way, too, actually. And the first book was done that way, too. So I blog every month Towards the topics that I want to cover.

And then at some point at the end, I decide that it's ready to go and then I put it in a draft form [00:05:00]. And there's chapters that are missing when you do that. So you go back and you try to figure out, okay, maybe I missed this thought. And, I'd say probably four or five of the chapters showed up after the first draft.

It took me probably about a year to do. The last book took six years to do, so there is, there is an improvement as you go along.

Maybe I'll read another section of the book if that's okay. So this is called Feelings Inside Not Expressed, or if you take all those first letters, it's the word fine. It's when we say we're fine.

“It was 9. 30 p. m. on a Thursday. One hand was deep inside a Cheddar Jack's Cheez It box, and the other held a full wine glass. An empty bottle of Chardonnay rested on the side table, and a *Million Dollar Listing Los Angeles*

episode was on TV. When I came to at 3 AM, I was bloated and anxious, and the first thing I thought was, “Why can't I stop doing this?”

The reason was that I was so exhausted from keeping the wheels turning on the work and mommy [00:06:00] bus that stuffed feelings of frustration, fear, and anger erupted. Almost every Thursday, not knowing any better, I numbed the uncomfortable energy with junk food, reality TV, and wine. This would still be my Thursday night routine if I hadn't started tracking my food and wine intake.

That's when I recognized it was an unhealthy habit. Why can't we let our feelings out instead of bottling them up? Because at some point, we learned it wasn't okay to feel or express our feelings, or that it was dangerous to do so, maybe because they threatened or embarrassed others. At age four, my parents forced me to sit through church services.

As an ordinary, active four-year-old, I didn't take to this too well. And I would sing, crawl under pews, or cry at the sad Bible stories, ending with my mother pulling me into the church basement and beating me while simultaneously shushing my cries. Eventually, I connected getting hit with being myself.

I shut down my emotions and a lot of who I was, [00:07:00] I tried to be the good girl to avoid abuse. Where did you learn how to handle your feelings? How are those teachings affecting your career, life, work, and relationships today, right? What comes to mind about this topic, if you get a chance and then ask yourself how you might embrace the emotions and express them safely.

We can start by using them as a clue instead of stuffing them down. One of my best cues and clues is saying, I'm fine. Whenever I utter it, I know I'm hiding my feelings. What does fine even mean? The definition of the word is very well, but is that what we mean when we say fine? No, when we say everything's good, we would say excellent, amazing, or wonderful.

We don't say fine. A perfect example of this can be found in Prince William's repeated use of the word in episode six of the latest season of the Netflix series, *The Crown*. If you watch [00:08:00] it, he says fine about 50 times. Maybe a more appropriate definition of fine is feelings inside, not expressed.”

I go on to talk about how our bodies can't hide our feelings, and a lot of times, we don't know that we're having these feelings. So we'll do a little thing with a tennis ball in a little bit. I think this is one that somebody brought up to me, a couple of people brought up to me, actually, so I thought I'd read this one because it's kind of relevant for today.

“Don't lean into the drama. What can we do instead of stuffing our feelings? We can give ourselves a break. There's no morality in feelings, only in behavior. We can feel angry without hurting anyone. Once we feel the feelings, apply some self-care and let them ebb and eventually flow away. While it may seem counterintuitive, the pain is better felt than resisted.

These emotionally charged times are like being on the razor's edge, the brink between normalcy and chaos. We see and feel things clearly and [00:09:00] viscerally. Our ability to express ourselves gracefully or guarded it's lowered. When we're raw like this, I say don't lean into the drama.

Sometimes past trauma and conditioning can make intense situations feel familiar and comfortable. But engaging with negative energy can cause a figurative or actual hangover and disrupt our healing.”

So I think that's just a really good one for these days. Because sometimes, you can get triggered, but you're not really triggered in the moment.

You're having an outsized reaction to what's happening around you. It's not real. And you can choose to have a different reaction. You don't have to get pulled into it or get into the drama of it. Many times, if you give yourself 24 hours, you won't really want to get engaged in it after that.

So it's a big one for me.

Any questions?

Attendee: Hi, Donna. I have a question about the color scheme of the book. I see a lot of purple and yellow. [00:10:00] Can you give some insight on the meaning behind that?

Donna Ferris: Well, I have my Reiki teacher in front of me.

So yeah, it's significant. The yellow was for solar plexus chakra, because to get through difficult times, you have to really be confident, and you have to believe in yourself, and you have to be disciplined, and it's got all those feelings. But you also have to lean on your higher powers, which is why the purple is there.

That's your crown chakra, and I felt you needed both of those things to kind of get through. And it's kind of a scary idea, actually, to put those two together a little bit. It wasn't, it's like a, not a normal kind of color scheme, but I loved it.

Plus, purple is royal. And I think there's a certain amount of you got to believe in yourself in all this.

You have to really believe that you're capable of doing it. And, you know, you want to be the royal you, the divine you. And so I liked the purple in there. So it's spiritual.

Attendee: So it wasn't for West Chester University?

Donna Ferris: No, it was not. Yeah! That's a good one.

But do [00:11:00] you remember, I don't know if, no, so the Cristina Leeson is here, and I don't know if you remember when you did my first Reiki one attunement, you probably don't, but you, you saw purple for me, and so that was another reason, for sure.

Attendee: But that's what it means, spiritual strength. Yep. That cover. Yeah. The yellow and the purple.

Donna Ferris: Spiritual strength. That's what you need to get through difficult times. For sure. Yeah, absolutely. Any other questions? I can do another reading.

Attendee: Oh, sorry. I have another one about the cover. What's the significance of the yellow ball on the cover? So the ball is to bounce back, but I kind of thought that it would be cool and I did not get the logo balls done, but there's a tennis ball meditation that I do with people and I actually have it up on my podcast now that's really good at helping you understand It was really good to instantly relax you and release the tension that you're holding in your body. There's something about rolling a tennis ball on your feet, in particular, that really releases a lot of tension. So we'll do that later. But I wanted to tie it into that ball and hopefully teach that to [00:12:00] people.

And I found it incredibly helpful. I keep one all the time at my desk actually, which is really, really helpful. I think there was another question actually. Thank you for the questions. Oh, sure. So somebody actually suggested I talk about the worksheets in the book. There are in the book there are coloring pages, so maybe we'll talk through those things.

That's a great idea, Saradha. Thank you. The book is really meant to kind of be savored, right? And, maybe take a chapter of time. One of my favorite books is

The Artist's Way, and *The Artist's Way* does that. It takes it a chapter at a time, you kind of simmer with it, and then, start with the next chapter.

So I have a lot of tools in the book. There's journaling pages there's guided meditations, with links. There's affirmations after each chapter. There's also a coloring page after each chapter. There is also one where you can go day by day and color as you go through your healing.

There is a Reiki, color and [00:13:00] crystal guidance. So, if you're interested in exploring that, there's some support for that at the beginning of the book. I really suggest that. planting a seed or planting a plant to watch it grow, which really helps us kind of get through the healing process, right? It feels like it'll never end, but as you watch something grow, it's really helpful to get you through those times.

I'm a big believer in sunrise and sunset practices to begin each day as a new day and see how beautifully you can end your day, even when it's a very difficult day, and how beautiful it can actually be. So there's a lot of those types of things here, and then at the end of every chapter, there's a list of affirmations which people can find really helpful, and because of some of my students, we have journaling pages too, so Patty recommended that, so if she listens to this later, Patty, thank you can also get your own journal, but my hope is that, you keep these things together, and you can go back and look at them.

Any other questions? Otherwise I'll read one more thing.

Attendee: Pardon me, Donna. [00:14:00] Pardon me. It's Mary Lou.

Donna Ferris: Hi, Mary Lou. Your ideas. Hey, my dear. Your ideas and your suggestions are they're building as well as healing. You're showing the individual as they are just buried in their grief or trouble or whatever it might be how to climb out and be stronger.

This is great. I love the idea of a plant. And it's so true. I call it playing with God's hair. And I didn't realize that it was helping me by watching something grow.

Donna Ferris: Yeah, it makes a difference. You know, and it kind of reminds you that the process of losing and healing is a natural process.

And then you can watch another process like growing a seed and see that's a natural process too. We're just all part of this natural process. And I think that

just helps. To take us out of thinking that we did something awful, that that's why we're suffering, or there's something wrong with us, or that what happened to us is particularly outsized awful.

In most cases, it's not. [00:15:00] It's just life, which is, I know, easy to say, but it is true.

Attendee: It's true, because if it was always just rosy, we wouldn't know the rosy.

Donna Ferris: We wouldn't know. We wouldn't know to be grateful.

Attendee: Yeah, we should be grateful for what we have. Please, go read. I want to hear more. Thank you.

Donna Ferris: Thank you so much.

So this is from Chapter 8, Body Wisdom.

“I have no idea how he found me, and I'm a bit peeved to be standing behind a salon reception desk, receiver in hand. This would be marginally acceptable, but I look like a satellite with crinkled aluminum foil pieces all over my head, not to mention the lobby is full of people gawking as I try to calm the whining male on the other side of the line.

“I know it's Sunday, Donna, but you've got to come in. I can't figure this asset liability spreadsheet out without you, and the bastards want the report on Wednesday.”

Yeah, I know. That's why I asked you to review it two weeks ago. “Can't this wait till tomorrow morning? I'll be there first [00:16:00] thing.” I sink into the receptionist and grab a handful of peanut M& Ms from the counter jar.

I have an 8 AM tea time tomorrow with the city pension manager. It's going to be 50 degrees. Not many more golf days with winter coming.

The irony. He wants me to come in on Sunday, because he'll be golfing during regular business hours. Although he'll say he's working. But does anyone believe that golfing with clients is work?

“I'm kind of in the middle of something,” I whisper. No need to give the lobby participants more entertainment than necessary.

“You keep saying you want to be promoted and have your own team. This is how you get there, darling, by making things happen.”

Darling? For God's sake, he was born in Allegheny County.

“I'm sorry. Okay, okay. I'll be there in an hour.”

Make it 30 minutes. I know where that salon is and it's only 15 minutes away with Sunday traffic.”

So that scene happened to me and still happens to [00:17:00] me. The key of that scene is that I reach for M&Ms because that's what I do, right? I reach for food when I'm stressed out. I still do it, but it's important to know that that's what you're doing and that you're having a reaction.

Like when you're doing that, try to figure out - what's pissing me off or what I am not managing, or what I am not addressing. And one of the most profound, and I'm going to read this section, one of the most profound early yoga class experiences was when a teacher asked us how we felt at the start of class.

“I had never thought to ask myself that. And at the time, I really had no way to answer. I had no, I had no real connection to how I was feeling. I was just reacting all the time. And it's a simple question because it can be hard to respond when you're not connected to your body or understand how past trauma is triggering you all the time, and this can lead to impulsive or hysterical responses to current situations that harm relationships and can harm careers.

In other words, hysterical reactions may be due to historical [00:18:00] triggers and sometimes I say hysterical is largely historical. One of my favorite quotes is by Viktor Frankl. Between stimulus and response, there's a space, and in that space is our freedom. How do we find that space and ability to pause? Yoga, as well as Tai Chi, Reiki, EMDR, and EFT can down-regulate our nervous system so we can think more clearly.

And since trauma sits in the body, physical activities that involve breathing and movement can heal and release it.”

So I am going to do the tennis ball. I don't know if anybody has a tennis ball on the line. So I may, just do it. But I wanted to see if there's any more questions before we finish up.

Attendee: How was it working with the designer? Oh, thank you. So Amy Junod Placentra did the book design. She also designed my first book. I can't recommend her enough. I think we probably had maybe 10 or 15 different book designs. And I also worked with Melanie Votaw, who, I should do my acknowledgements, Melanie Votaw, [00:19:00] who was my developmental editor, and she was incredibly helpful in determining how this cover should look.

I also went to bookstores, which I highly recommend if you're doing a book and taking pictures of everything I saw. And then we worked together quite a bit over time on this cover. So anyway she was phenomenal to work with. Actually, let me just do the acknowledgements real quick.

Here's the acknowledgements.

“My dad died when I was 25 and my life fell apart. He was the only parent who loved me unconditionally and believed in me. He said I would be the most spiritual of his children, even though I had recently received my MBA straight after undergrad and was pursuing a money focused financial career hard.

Now I have to say it was the eighties. So, so was everybody else. After he died, I was lost and over functioned for a time. I cared for my mother, took on a job with a required 80-hour work week, which is where that scene from the beauty salon comes from, and fell into a marriage that felt safe. I leaned heavily on the book, *How to Survive the Loss of a Love*, and vowed to share what I learned with all my friends facing their own grief journeys, thinking [00:20:00] I had it all figured out.

What I realized today is it's not enough to survive. We've got to bounce back, and we've got to thrive. And so here I am, over 30 years later, publishing this book, knowing that loss is one of life's biggest teachers. And it never stops giving. This book encapsulates everything I've learned from my lost journey, and in writing my memoir, *We've Got to Stop Meeting Like This*, and the related workshops and retreats that followed.

Thank you to all of my readers, students, clients, and podcast listeners for reading, following, and allowing me to be a part of your journey, especially Christine Bennett, Teresa Hoffman, Lydia Lampert, Patti Stromberg, and Sylvie

Ashby. Thank you to my copy editor, Kevin Ferris, developmental editor, Melanie Votaw, my sanity check editor, Beverly Wilkes, and cover and book designer, Amy Junod Placentra.

Thank you to Sharon Salzberg, Erin Byron, Cristina [00:21:00] Leeson, Colleen Dixon, and Maria Sirois for their support and inspiration. Special shout out for my siblings for their love and support no matter the distance between us. Thank you to Samson and Yogi Cooper and Jake for their unconditional love and effortless ability to make us laugh.

Thank you to my best friend, Joy. I am so grateful for your gentle guidance in my life. Thank you to my dear children, one upstairs, one on here, who have taught me as much as I have them. And finally, thank you to my beloved Kevin for showing me what it means to be kind, generous, and loving. I am blessed by every day we are together.”

All right, so she starts crying, so it's got to be done. So, I'm going to do the tennis ball. For those that are here, I've got tennis balls. They are very clean. So, grab a tennis ball if you'd like to try it. I've got ten. So you'll need to take your shoes off.

Anybody else? [00:22:00] Actually, it's so funny. I interviewed somebody yesterday or two days ago and he actually saw my LinkedIn post about this and he picked up the ball and he's like, look, that's all I have to say is I have the tennis ball. I thought it was pretty funny. Anybody else?

Nope. All right, so you can do it from the floor. I will. So, bare feet would be best. Yes. So, we're going to just start off with the tennis ball, right below It's a big toe.

We're gonna bounce on that tennis ball right there, right below that big toe, that pad there. And then you're gonna roll it back and forth on the pads right below the toes. We're just gonna do that for a moment. You don't have to press real hard or do you have to press hard? No, you don't have to press hard. We just can just a little bit. And then, and then you [00:23:00] might want to roll it down the arch of your foot.

You're going to find that spot that's going to really feel good to you, and then roll the outside of the foot. And then on to the heel. There's sometimes there's also this little spot right before the heel that you'll, that'll feel really good. Yeah. And then you might want to reach and take the toes and grip the ball just a little bit and then just play with a little bit more.

Just kind of, massaging your foot. There's a lot of great ways to do your own massaging, not that I don't want to go to get a massage all the time, but it's nice to be able to do it yourself. And then I'm just going to ask you to just roll it to the side for a second and just notice right and left feet or whatever feet you did.

You might notice that the foot that you just did the massage on feels lower, feels warmer, feels a little bit. It's almost stretched out, right? You [00:24:00] can kind of feel like it's a little bit bigger.

Attendee: And then it feels more relaxed too.

Donna Ferris: Yeah. Feels more relaxed. Right. And then it's funny that you don't even notice you were holding that much tension in the foot there.

Let's do the other side. So we're going to bounce below the big toe. So you kind of know what you're going to do now and you know what you like. So maybe go back and forth on that pad and then down the, and you can do this, actually roll it on the bottom of the foot. You don't have to actually do it on the ground and then do the outside of the foot.

And then make sure you get the heel. This is good to prevent plantar fasciitis. Getting that little spot right before the heel too. And then maybe grip it with your toes. Roll around. And then just take a moment to notice how it feels on both feet. So your feet are connected to a lot of different parts of your body, so you'll feel, hopefully, [00:25:00] a lot better even up through your legs.

So it's really helpful. And so, the point of this is that this is available at any time, right? You could do this at your desk, you could do this in your car. And it just gives you a nice quick relief of stress. And I think it's always interesting to know.

I can think I'm really, really not feeling stressed. And then I do this and I go, Oh, there's a lot going on there.

Attendee: It's mindfulness too. It is mindfulness. It's putting you in the moment.

Donna Ferris: Yeah, you're right.

Attendee: One thing with meditation that you're talking about meditation to help you relax.

Sometimes we can't get into meditation because our brains are swimming. But if you do something that is in the moment. Like, start naming the things that are around you. The umbrella, the sun's out, the purple flowers the brick wall. You start naming things that [00:26:00] are around you, and it kind of gets you out of that head muck.

Donna Ferris: Yep. And it puts you back in the space, in the moment. Yep. And, and this does it. That's what that does. You can't think about anything when you're doing that. No, you have to focus on it. And, and especially when you're standing, if you're doing it, then you can be on balance and then you'll be really worried about.

And the funny story, I learned this the first yoga therapy class after President Trump was elected. And they didn't want to talk about it because the room was, you know, not everybody was on what side or the other, so they couldn't say how they felt.

So they started off the class with this, with this bit was really, really important because they really wanted to focus on yoga therapy, not on politics, which is also my mantra as well.

So I think with that, I'm going to close. So thank you all for coming both here in person and online.

Thanks so, so much. And if if you have any questions or anything, just feel free to reach [00:27:00] out.

Namaste.