

S01 - E36 - Rooted & Unwavering – Dec 22, 2023 - Hylke Faber & Sunita Theiss

Presenter 00:02

Welcome to rooted and unwavering a podcast and radio show which features leaders from all walks of life in conversations about courageous connectedness. How do we stay connected to our best selves, especially when we are challenged? What becomes possible when we truly stay committed to our own and others rightness also when we don't feel it, join hosts Philco, Faber, transformational coach, facilitator, and award winning author of taming your crocodiles and his guests as they explore leadership greatness in today's episode of rooted and unwavering.

Hylke Faber 00:42

Well, welcome to Ruth an unwavering broadcasting live from Phoenix, Arizona and also from the East Coast today. We are rooted in wavering where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. This is episode number 36 On the last working day of this year 2023 of the beginning of winter, and of course, if you're listening to this later, this always the time that it is, and I'm here today with SUTA Tice, who is a writer, Marketing and Communications Consultant and also a mother. We'll hear about this more in a second. How're you doing? Sunita today?

Sunita Theiss 01:24

I'm doing well. I'm looking forward to some family time this holiday season.

Hylke Faber 01:30

Excellent. Well, I'm very happy that you're here, Sunita, and that you're gracing us with your presence a little bit more about Ruth and unwavering. And then about Sunita. So I'm sitting here today, reflecting on the 35 conversations we've had on Bluetooth and unwavering. And the purpose of this podcast is all to help us to become more connected to what's most important to us, not what the expectations might be off us. But really what is most important to us. And that, to me is a journey of ongoing and inner contemplation. And then along the way, we're not in this journey by ourselves, we're in this together. So we get to travel with other people and get to hear from other leaders from all walks of life, in this case, on this podcast about their experience. And I find it so helpful to as I go and be reflective about what's most important to me how connect to my true self, others and my purpose to hear from others. And so today, I'm very happy we're going to hear from Sunita who is an amazing human being. As I said, he is a marketing and communications consultant and a writer with more than a decade of experience in a wide variety of industries, including b2b software, health communications, nonprofit management and government. And he's currently you don't often see this in a resume, in a downshift in her career to be more hands on with her family. She works with a small number of clients, sees a published poet, and she homeschools her children. And when I met her, I was actually trying to ask her to do some writing



with us. And her response was, I'd love to and my schedule is full already. So we'll hear more about this in a second. Which I thought was such an amazing response because I don't hear that very often in today's world. I also noticed about Sunita that that there is a presence and a groundedness and a clarity and a courage about living her life in a way that aligns with who she is that I found utterly inspiring. So I'm so glad that you're here today, Sunita, and I'm going to start with the first question that we always ask them this podcast, which is tell me more about your experience and what you've learned about connectedness in your life and leadership. Thank you so much.

Sunita Theiss 04:09

That was a beautiful introduction. For me, I think feeling connected to what I'm doing is, is critical to to being successful and also to not experiencing anxiety or stress. So whether that's in, in homeschooling or in a workplace setting, I need to really be connected to the mission of the organization I'm working for or how we're choosing to raise our family. And so, so professionally that's looked like really wanting to understand and getting curious about the why of whoever I've been working for so so currently I work with a couple of non profit clients and then an executive coach. And the thing that is so valuable to me about the work that We're doing is that they're helping people connect to what is really valuable to them and what matters to them. And at home that that looks like, you know, being really grounded in, in the pace of life, we want our children to experience and, and being very open and honest and vulnerable with each other from a very early age.

Hylke Faber 05:22

This is great. So tell me more about this. Finding a pace, finding the pace, because that, to me is one of the things that is so different about your story. Because the pay seems often to be something that's prescribed. And I think you've turned it upside down. So tell me more, tell us more about that.

Sunita Theiss 05:48

I've always been a little bit of a contrarian, I think so. So my, my parents would probably have told you that, if they told me what to do, I would do the opposite. And so I think that's been a really useful quality in the season that we're in, but, you know, when my husband and I got got married, even when we were dating, we talked a lot about, like, what we wanted our life to look like, in five years, or 10 years, or in 50 years. And we really wanted things like having dinner as a family, and doing bedtime with our kids together and, and spending more evenings together just kind of idling, if you will, I think we're not very good at leisure in, in our culture. And so, that meant that after we had our first child that I, I decided, well, we decided together, but I suggested that I would be the one to scale back professionally first. Because, you know, I wanted there, like physical needs that our kids had, that literally I could meet, but also, there was like an urgency within me. And the only way to quiet that was to be present with our children more. So I started working for nonprofits and eventually started working for myself and, and, and slowly, you know, started working less hours and less hours until now I work a little less than half time. And at the same time, you know, my husband's an attorney. And we had friends who are in law firms and doing really incredible work and helping people and they were very successful. But they only saw their kids on the weekends. And and we might well can we can we have a quality of life



that feels sustainable, and enjoyable and, and meets our sort of extremely tangible needs, while also creating a lot of space to meet our relational needs. And, and that's that's how we've wound up where we are. He works for a large corporation, but he flexes his schedule. So he he's in the office about seven to three. So he's home by four. So our kids get a really lovely amount of time every weekday with her dad, I work a few hours a day, usually around things like naps and childcare and and that's been so far working for us. And we're constantly experimenting with it do and I think I think that's how you really find your pace is that you have to be willing to take calculated risks, but take risks and experiment with your time and experiment with your your logistical margin and your financial margin until you find something that that works for you.

Hylke Faber 08:36

I'm very curious Anita about this. Where with all that you have to even have that conversation, right? So imagine you were dating and you were talking about what you want your life to be. And I'm imagining there being many voices in one's head about what you want your life to be. And, you know, what's my voice? What's the expectation of others voice like? Like, what are we doing? So can you see more about how you discerned together and by yourself? what's truly important to you?

Sunita Theiss 09:23

I think I think it's been iterative, honestly, like we when we got married, even when we found out we were pregnant with our first child, I don't think I expected to ever not work full time. I still had a lot of high professional ambitions. But we knew that there were a few things that mattered and I think I think as we were just trying to align on values and see if this thing was going to work, right like dating is basically an experiment to right you have to like you're you're you're sort of doing an interview for life while you're dating. You're trying to decide if this is the person I want to be with. And this is the person I want to do hard things with, and not just have fun. But like, when we are we are in the thick of it. And we don't like ourselves or each other very much like, Can I look at you every day? You know, we joke that marriage is choosing to wake up and be frustrated by the same person every single day and love them anyway. And and so I think like that stuck stuck with that for a second. I

Hylke Faber 10:30

think it's so beautiful. Marriage is a commitment to be able to say, wake up with every person, the same person every morning, every day and be frustrated with them, and love them. Yeah. Anyway. Yeah, that's it. I love that. Yes. Tell you're a poet and a writer. Yes, thank you. And

Sunita Theiss 10:50

I think we, you know, what, my husband, I are very different people, we need a lot of different things in terms of how we spend our time, I'm way more of an extrovert. He's an introvert, I am a much more spontaneous personality. He's very organized and structured and likes predictability. And so like we we frustrate each other, but we also really delight in doing this life together. And I think we, we just wanted to align on what was important and what difficult things we were willing to go through together, as much as you can predict that, right? Like we didn't know, we would experience some of the challenges we've



experienced. But we also knew that we were willing to like let's say, make less money to spend more time with our kids when we have them or live further away from work so that we could have enough house so that if we ended up having a ton of kids, we'd have enough space. And like, you know, those are and I think the important thing, and you talk about connection is that we had to stay connected to each other and what mattered to each other as much as being connected to sort of our internal alarms. And you know, because your your body notices things, sometimes even before your mind does. And so if I start to feel uncomfortable, I'll say this doesn't feel right. And I can't put words to it yet. But let's explore that together. And so we've just always kept lines of communication open. And now that we have two young kids, that means that like we put a meeting on the calendar, once a week, and we talked and we talked about money, and we talked about schedules, but we also talked about like, what we feel like is going well, and what we need from each other and like how we can love each other well, and I think I think professionally, like the best relationships I've had with superiors and people reported to me is when we've had those check ins to right like you, your relationships are most successful when you're actually talking to each other about what you need, and then genuinely endeavoring to meet those needs for

Hylke Faber 12:56

the other person. Yes, I hear so much reflection in your household reflection, as opposed to going from one motion to the next. Like, oh, we like each other. Oh, now we're engaged over married? No, no, no, like, interview for life that's already very reflective, right? That just to be to have be cognizant that we're interviewing for life. And then having those check ins with each other. What do you call this, given that name for these meetings, they

Sunita Theiss 13:26

call them family meetings. And the hope is, as our kids get older, they get involved too. So he and I, we have we have a daily 15 minute check in our kids know, like mom and dad are taking some time and they will watch a show or play or something. And then we have a weekly family meeting. And the hope is as our kids get older, that they're involved in the conversations around logistics and and but generally also that they're involved in this exercise of mindfulness. And just being conscious of like, what did I like about this week? What didn't I like about this week, and we have conversations with our with our older child at bedtime that are similar to this, but like, knowing that we're all going to come together as a family. And this is not just an airing of grievances, but it is sort of a way to intentionally like discuss how to love each other better. And also be thoughtful about our own actions and the way that we're going about the world.

Hylke Faber 14:28

So family meetings and daily check ins Yeah, so do you have an agenda for his daily check ins or how does it work?

Sunita Theiss 14:35



Um, it kind of like debrief on our days because he's usually he works out of the office four days a week, and then he works from home one day. So I'm usually here all day and our days very well. We have one of our kids has a nervous system disability. And so we have appointments and we have childcare and we have all kinds of things going on. And so it's kind of like can we take a breath together and reset before family time. But sometimes I will say sort of the code for that, as I'll say, I need some chitchat. And he knows that's just aimless talking, which is what I need as an extrovert. And so we had to come up with kind of a word for it, because he'd be like, I don't know why we're talking about this. And I'm like, I just need to say it out loud. And so we don't have an agenda daily. But weekly, we do each bring a few points ahead of time, like, I might say, hey, we need to come up with a schedule for this activity, or I want to spend money on these things for school or whatever it is. Like, before the holidays, we had a conversation about all the meals we wanted to eat, because we would he would be all for it. And we would have time together. And and he likes to cook. And I do a lot of the cooking every day. But he wanted to make fun meals. And so like we talked about what that would look like. And that was one of the points on our agenda, you know, and it varies week to week. But that's what works for us.

Hylke Faber 16:05

I love that intentional check ins every day. I'm inspired by this. I want to try this at home. Yeah, I see it. I love it. chit chats. And then do they always stay to 15 minutes, or how does that work?

Sunita Theiss 16:22

Sometimes it's five, sometimes it's 30. It's just the point is that we want to some days, we don't do them at all, if it's just a hard day. And we might end up talking after the kids go to bed. But the goal is for us to take a breath together and connect with each other. And sometimes we need more time for that sometimes all we have time for is I'll say if I've had, if I'm experiencing stress for any reason, I'll say to him, I need to borrow your nervous system. And I'll be like, I just need you to hug me and say nothing. And we will just stand there. And then I calm down, because he is a calming presence for me. And he can feel my body relax. And then we can talk about whatever needs to happen. So I think we've developed an internal kind of vocabulary in our marriage to where I'll say I want you to chat or I need your nervous system or whatever it is. And he knows that means she wants to talk or she doesn't want to talk. But she needs me nearby.

Hylke Faber 17:23

very clear, very clear, very clear. I'm curious about this question or orientation about AI? Are we using this as a way to love each other more? So is that a question that you explicitly talk about? Or how does that come up in the conversation in the daily or weekly check ins? I'm fascinated by this?

Sunita Theiss 17:43

I think it depends. On the day. I've, I've directly said how can I love you well today, but sometimes it's I'm talking about a thing that feels hard. And he'll say, Would it help if I did XYZ or he'll make a mental note and say I need to do this to help my wife. Or sometimes I'll say it would mean a lot to me if



whatever needed to happen happened. And I think I actually think it's a skill we both developed initially professionally, we learned how to communicate at work in a way that was considerate of the other person. But also like clearly stated how you need support. So we're, you know, we joke a lot about our action items out of our family meetings, right? And, but I think it's a skill we developed before we met but your best interactions and your best relationships happen when you're you're very clear about your needs. And you identify like, this is how I need help meeting a need that I have or a goal that I have. And then in our in our marriage and with our children that that's coming from a posture of love.

Hylke Faber 19:00

Seems like something that's so somatic for the way you're living and how can you love I love you more. How can I honor you more? How can I take care of your needs more of your truth more and that I hear in all of your life, including some very visible implications about how you spend your time. So because you're talking about these things, like very sort of easily off the cuff. This is like normal life for Sunita and for many people in the world. This is not what's normal life, right? This is not what's normal life. So I want to this pause a little bit and do a little mindful reflection on some of these questions or choices you have made or may have made along the way. For example, you said Yeah, make some less money. So in this society, that is a Almost like taboo to say that, and for many people even impossible to consider given that they need two or three or four incomes to even be able to pay their health care costs, or their housing or their food, or whatever it is. So say a bit more about this relationship with balancing all these different needs that one has, and integrating that with connecting what you would usually really want to do in your life. How do you do that?

Sunita Theiss 20:28

Well, you know, I think, I think we have we acknowledge a lot that we are in a very privileged position that we could even make that choice, right, like, to your point, there are people who it's not even an option for we live in a state that has a relatively low cost of living compared to the rest of the country, which also has helped us make these decisions, right. Like, we were able to buy a house at a time when interest rates were low, and our mortgages afford it like we there are all these things that that were that happened, not to us, but that we noticed opportunities, and we were able to take them we I talked earlier about taking calculated risks, and and I think, you know, we could have probably had more money saved before we bought a house, but we went, this is probably a good time. Can we swing it and we did. But we if we want to swing it, we have to live a little further away from work than we'd intended from our friends. But the long term benefit is valuable to us because we have the opportunity to maybe keep to raise our kids in the same house into their adulthood. And that was something that was important to us. And so again, it's like we identified our shared values, but But I think one of those values is that our time is our most precious resource. And so you can't I'll say this, you can buy time to an extent, right, like, I can pay someone to come do my yard work so that I get that hour back on Saturdays, or I can pay someone to clean my house to give me a little bit of time during the week. But after a certain point, like you can't buy time, you can't spend money to give yourself time. So we talk a lot about like, what our time is worth and how valuable our time is, and and to be more intentional in the way that we're using that resource because we only get so many years and so many weeks with each



other with our kids, even just as individuals in this world and and it wasn't worth working 80 hours a week. It just the you know, it just it wasn't worth utilizing our time to make more money, but not necessarily money that really would set us up in a way that that would give us a drastically better quality of life, right? Like we went out with maybe our time is better spent with our kids instead of outsourcing that. And and I think I think the thing that's really important is to name what matters to you and your family. Now, for us, this is what has worked. And we're not experts by any means. And we are still early in this journey of parenting, but we keep checking in about what matters, do the things that mattered to us a year ago still matter today, in a year, are they the same values? And and if they aren't, can we pivot? If I ever say You know, this homeschool thing is just not working, I cannot do this anymore. We're gonna pivot we've already agreed that like we will take it a year at a time. And if I say I need to get back into an office, I miss being around adults. Let's find a different way to support our kids and meet their needs because they're only as whole as we are. And so just an extreme amount of communication and pursuing connection has led us to that conclusion. But it wasn't I mean I think you know I like I said earlier in the conversation I fully expected to like be on this like highly professionalized strike I wanted to be in the C suite in my 40s like I had a vision for what I was going to do and then I I think we just we like spending time with each other and then we really enjoyed our kids and we went Can we can we do this can we actually like make this sort of sharp turn left away from what everyone else is doing and and so far you know, it's it's working

Hylke Faber 24:31

question that comes up from me Sunita is you talk about the sharp turn left. And you've talked about what you've moved towards right art and what you're moving from an in the sense of I'm we're really enjoying really enjoying spending time together and, and we are intentional about that even when we are not comfortable with each other or we irritate each other. We're still finding a way and being committed to loving each other in so many ways that you've been describing. And there's the sharp turn left. Yeah. Which to me means that there's a saying goodbye to some things, leaving behind some things, some things that you are one may be attached to. Right. So life is finite in time and attention that we have. And you said, you know, I envisioned myself in the C suite in my 40s so there Sunita turns left what did that what does that feel like? Or what did that feel like that turning left those decisions? Well,

Sunita Theiss 25:45

I mean, I think I think there is a grieving of expectations and I've have an a sort of laying to rest plans and dreams, but I, at the risk of sounding a little bit cynical, it's at the end of the day, that's a fantasy, right? Like we can have all the goals we want but until we realize them or we move towards them, it's just an idea and a dream that we have and I think the dream changed in such a tangible way and I went I will just cast all the rest of it aside for this. But at the same time, you know, it's it's hard i We drive really old cars, right like that's that's one thing that you know, when when I when when we're going to like a professional event or like a holiday party and we're rolling up in an 18 year old Honda Accord, right? Like you know, we talked about how like our car is old enough to vote but we don't have a car payment which gives us the financial freedom for me to work less right and like there there are things like that that we it's hard I want I want to drive a nice car but like mostly it's for my vanity and and so



being self aware enough to say like this is a desire I have but it is not getting me to the goal and I think identifying those things giving ourselves the space to grieve the dream the expectation that desire but also just like being grateful that like we have a car that works just fine. Yes. And just like pausing it in that space of gratitude and is really really important to me and really valuable to me and it gives me the room to grieve to

Hylke Faber 27:48

I'm with you so much in this and I just want to unpack the grieving a little bit more before we get to the the other good stuff the grieving can be good to say a bit more about how you've done that grieving I'm thinking about you showing up in the 18 year old awkward on the court I think that was and you know of course it means nothing. Right? And at the same time, you may have feelings or end people around you may unconsciously sent you their judgments or expectations or what have you. So tell us more about that grieving process. I really feel you've like shaken yourself free from so much of that. And I really want you to speak to that because I sense many people that are listening are starting to become aware and are sort of in the middle of that shaking free or not shaking yet process

Sunita Theiss 28:54

I think honestly it has its ups and downs Right? Like I'm not I'm not totally free of it. Like when I pull up in valet with my old car and there's you know, a BMW in front of me and the beautiful Lexus behind me you know, I'm just like no, the valet will get a kick out of this but I think it keeps coming back to like really being clear about what matters. I mean really clear about how you're going to get there and then with the judgment like that that hurts a lot I'm I get very sensitive about other people's perception of us and opinions of us and the things people say because I think I think at our core all human beings just really want to be seen and heard and understood. And so it's like they don't understand me like they don't they don't know why I'm doing this. And we an exercise we've done is is basically just like named who gets a vote in our life. And that's been part of our process. Because it's going to be painful like we we're human and humans desire to connect with one another and to be seen by one another. But we can we can do a sort of an internal gut check and say, Why does their opinion matter? Or why is this something I'm holding as a marker for my status or my success. And so there is a, there's a psychologist named John Maloney, I think he's a psychologist, he's a podcast that and he talks about sort of visualizing a box, and putting the names of the people who get to speak into your life into that box. And so, we each individually did that exercise, and then came together and talked about it in the context of our marriage and our family. So the people in my box are the people who get a vote in my life, and I can speak into it. And if I start to feel hurt, because someone's looking at me funny or like, doesn't understand why I've made the choice that I've made. You know, we haven't talked about this this much. But like, within, you know, the Indian community, too, like my parents worked really hard and had advanced degrees and did all this stuff. And then it was like, I'm not gonna go to grad school, and I'm going to be a homeschool mom. And that was very jarring for a lot of my family and family friends, but but they're not in the box. You know, and, and I think that's how I manage it myself. That's how we manage it in our marriage is like they're not in the box, they don't get a vote, they can have their opinion, they can choose to respond the way that they do, but I can choose not to let it linger for days.



And so you notice that, that it feels hard, or it feels sad, or it grieves you. And then if it's another person's judgment, you say they don't get a vote. And if there's a situational thing, or a success thing or status thing, you just have to get curious about it. The process is hard, I didn't do it alone, I went to counseling, highly recommend that even just sort of a check in for people a few times a year. And I just wanted to be really clear on on what I was doing, and why I was doing it and where I was going with it. And if you can clarify that that purpose, that sort of core values that the things that matter more to you than anything else, the other stuff starts to matter. And the grief starts to be less acute.

Hylke Faber 32:34

Thank you for sharing who gets a vote, we're gonna take a short break. We're talking to synthesize, who's a marketing consultant, writer, and poet, homeschool mom, and somebody who has been speaking about who gets to vote standing really, in what you value. And not be that just a theoretical exercise, but something that one lives day in, day out and refined, refined and refined and just been a delight to listen to you. So let's take a break and we'll be back to explore more who gets a vote.

33:13

You are listening to rooted and unwavering presented by growth Leaders Network, the leadership team and culture development company. If you would like to learn more about working on connectedness for yourself, your team or organization, please contact growth leaders network on LinkedIn. And now back to the show.

Hylke Faber 33:39

Welcome back to return wavering, we're talking to sneeze at dice. I'm your host Hylke Faber. And we've been talking about discerning what's truly important to you who gets a vote and living from that deeply connected place. Not as an esoteric exercise, but actually something as a very real life practice. So Sunita, tell us more about this process of emerging what's important because you're also letting us know that this is not a static thing, like once and done, you know, you still get frustrated with each other in your marriage and you still love each other and you still feel things when you drive up to the valet and there's a Lexus and BMW before and behind you are. So tell us about that process of emerging more deeply what's important to you, in the in your day to day How do you do that?

Sunita Theiss 34:41

Um, I think it requires a lot of curiosity. And it requires a willingness to be to be wrong or to be humbled by the things around you. I think children are really good at humbling you too. I'm just because they don't, they don't have filters most of the time. And they notice things and they're curious about things naturally. And so I think getting back to that place inside of you of like, why am I? Why am I feeling this way? What is the stirring up within me finding people that you feel comfortable and safe processing out loud with has been a really important part of the journey for us to just with each other, but also like upon close friends, when I was deciding to transition out of, you know, this, like 6070 hour a week job to work at a nonprofit. I had people in my life like the sort of the trusted advisors in my life professionally that had made this decision, but also hadn't made the decision. I had other parents that were I totally get



why you're doing this. But that's not what I would do. And I also had people who said, Yeah, I had to slow down because I realized I couldn't, I could have it all, but not all at once. And so I made a similar choice in this season. And I think I like I like doing research, I like sort of being a student of how other people have done things as much as myself, I didn't. And so it wasn't totally clear what it would look like, but we knew we wanted more time as a family. And then we just continued to to be curious. To clarify the house. So we went, Okay, we want to be together as a family. Now we have to reverse engineer that, like, what does that look like? Okay, we can't work 80 hours a week, that's not going to get us there. How can we work less, but still maintain our quality of life, and you kind of you work backwards to do the steps until you go okay, now I'm where I am. So the next step I take is, whatever it might be. For me, that meant when when my son was six months old, I started looking for another job. And because it wasn't sustainable, I was gone a lot more than I wanted to be. We eat a lot of takeout, it was not, you know, we like physically, we weren't taking good care of our bodies. We weren't taking care of ourselves relationally. And so I found a job at a nonprofit. And then I worked at a different nonprofit. And then I started working for myself and and build a freelance portfolio and then slowly scaled back. But all along the way, sort of as I'm taking these very tangible, professional steps, the conversations I was having with mentors and friends and my husband, where is this going to get me to the place I want to be, which is evolving as well, right? Like at first it was I just want to stop dinners together. And I was like, actually, I think I want to homeschool. And without that sort of open vulnerable communication and without and without, like the people speaking into my life that I trusted the people who are in the box, right. And I don't think I would have been able to clarify what mattered and how I wanted to get there with the same timeline and the same level of specificity.

Hylke Faber 38:17

The transition between I knew I wanted to have dinner together to whoop, I want to homeschool my children. And somewhere in there this transition from the 60 to 80 year workweek to this nonprofit. Say more about how give us a picture of what happened back in snoot as days where she had this for five, six months, your old, your firstborn. And you're working all these hours and takeouts, what was going on inside of you? And how did you work with that? Because many people will use a mantra vote. You know, just push through it. That's the game. You got to play the game, otherwise you will lose it all let's say more about that I'm

Sunita Theiss 39:11

pushing through was becoming kind of untenable. I think that was part of it. Right? Like I was just like I can't, I'm tired. We didn't know at the time that our son had had a nervous system disability, but we knew he was having a hard time sleeping. And I was part of this international marketing team. And you know, we have people in the UK and Australia and I'm here in the US on the East Coast. And so once a month, we had a meeting at like 4am my time so that all of us could get on a call and then once a month we had a call that was 10pm for the guys in Australia and it was I was like I'm getting up and taking this meeting at 4am and then I'm trying to get 30 minutes and I'm just doing my hair and putting on a shirt but like I have pajama pants on right and I'm what I'm gonna do hopped back into bed for 30 minutes, and I'm gonna get up and I'm going to get the baby stuff ready, and I'm gonna drop him off at



daycare, and I'm gonna drive to work. And I'm gonna have a high stress Dave. And you know, God forbid, I have to also support marketing for an event on the West Coast. And so now, I'm logging on to work at 8pm My time and I've just been awake since 408. And it just was feeling so frantic, and so fraught, and we weren't enjoying each other at all. And and I just didn't see the point and getting married and having a family if you didn't get to enjoy each other. And, and, you know, and my husband, had he changed jobs, right after we had our son, I think a few months after, and, and so we were both in this this season of like, we're working a ton. We're not at the place in our career, where we're making a lot of money, and we have a ton of vacation time, but we still have to navigate this, and how do we do it. And, you know, the best daycares are so expensive. And we found an in home daycare, and that that gave me some peace because she was just there. And it was like, if I couldn't be there, at least there was like another mom who was there with her young kids and but it just like wasn't enough. And what I wanted most, and what I think in that season mattered most to me was just being together as a family as a new family. And I couldn't get that, and no amount of work or money or bonuses, like would give me that. And so my husband, I started talking and I said this sucks. I don't want to do this anymore. And he went, Okay, why? And we talked about it. And we said, what's the plan? How do we get you in a place that we can meet all of the needs as a family, and we couldn't meet all of our needs, we still haven't met all of our needs right away. But we went we can afford for me to take this much of a pickup. And so I started applying for jobs, at nonprofit organizations at schools doing communications, like just trying to see if I could find something that wouldn't require a 4am meeting followed by an 8pm meeting the same day. And then from there, our son got his diagnosis, we realize that he's going to need more support, there's no amount of money we could spend that could individualize that support in the same way that I could do it. I sort of being his chauffeur between appointments, but also providing the most individualized approach to education. So I've learned so much about like, you know, pedagogy and different educational methods and what works for kids with disabilities and and sort of taking that I guess, like professional tenacity and applied it to the way that we're educating our children. Because I'm still doing a ton of research and I'm still putting plans and schedules and together and I'm just project managing a different kind of life. Now,

Hylke Faber 43:07

yes, I can see that I can see that. The difference between knowing I want this time together. I was very struck by you saying Sunita, why get married, why have a family if you're not going to spend time together, right? And you prioritizing time together over this number? Or the prestige, where the the number and the prestige can feel very tangible. And the time together can feel very intangible. So how did how do you connect to that? What is intrinsically intangible but yet so valuable? How does that awareness in you even exist? Because I think in many people that is dormant. And

Sunita Theiss 44:15

I think we were really clear on what we didn't want. And I think that's a really useful exercise to like if something in your if your life feels difficult or off or you're just unhappy with it. Think like diving into what about it? Is it is it reminding you of something in childhood? Is it is it hitting on a point of insecurity like what what is it that is that is causing this discomfort? And for me, my dad was really sick when I was



growing up. He was sick from when I was five until he was 20 when he passed away. And we just had a very frantic pace of life as a family. My mom was working full time in the midst of all this and When I saw my mom turned down promotions and opportunities to move up professionally, to be present with her family, so I think I was privileged to have a precedent in front of me, when being a female in software, you know, was already like, she was one of a very small number of people doing what she was doing in the 80s, and 90s. But she still went, I'm gonna make this choice. And I'm gonna find a way to make it work. And I remember in the years leading up to my dad passing away, my mom had a job that allowed her to work for 10 hour days, so that she could spend one day taking my dad to chemo. And so I was like, if she can make this work, and that was, you know, 2004 or 5678, you know, that we can, we can make it work. Now, we have even more opportunities in front of us even more flexibility and way better technology. And, and so I think that was modeled for me. And then with my husband, his dad's a pilot. And so he was gone a lot. And he went, I don't want to just get chunks, and then be gone, and then come home for a chunk of time and be gone. How can I daily connect, and so our experiences and formed what we didn't want? And then it informed that like, and then we were able to say, Okay, well, this is what we don't want. So how do we get what we do want

Hylke Faber 46:25

very clear, the integration also of what was modeled, that actually helps you today, I can only imagine what a brave journey your mom is, and has been or was on in that time. And, and being able to make the make conscious choices, how I'm going to spend four days 10 hours and then I can spend the next day spending my my husband doing chemo for him. That giving you a sense of like, oh, we do have choices, how we do things. And that to me is so refreshing in this conversation Sunita, that you in the way you live, tell all of us without preaching about it, that we do have choices that we do have choices that we don't have to take on. The rat race, great structure, that seems to be the mainstream structure of today. And I also really appreciate your humility and saying in that comment, I'm in a privileged place where I may have more degrees of freedom than a person that's not in that place may have. So I really appreciate those things also. So what would you say to a person who is in the middle of the muck, you know, where that sense of inner alignment with outer alignment is just not there. And life just hurts. I feel overworked stressed out. But I also don't know whether I can stop because I've got a mortgage, college payments, hospital bills, whatever it might be going on. And, and I don't even know whether I like spending time at home. It's a it's a whole thing also to to discover, it's holding to discover with people, we are all suffering from Stockholm syndrome in some way that we're always captured by our captors in some way and then fall in love with them. And I'm scared to leave. So let's say more about what would you say to a person who's in the middle of that muck.

Sunita Theiss 48:45

I would say don't do it alone. Because you can't that you know, you can't get curious you can't start identifying the things that you can trim off of your life or the things that you can change or even like naming what matters. Without having someone to be like an advisor or a mentor or a friend to speak wisdom into your life. So find who that person is, if that's your spouse, that's fantastic. If it's a friend or a therapist or a counselor or if you're a person of faith finding you know, a leader in your church or



community of faith. Just just find a person to be on the journey with you because it's hard. And there's this this researcher named David Kessler, he writes a lot about grief and, and he says grief demands a witness. And you're going to have to grieve your expectations and you're going to have to grieve the things that you have if you choose to let them go. And you can't do that. in isolation. You have to have people around you. And so if you're not connected to another person who can going to be a tether on this journey You can say, I'm here, and I'm watching you, and I'm not letting you go. You're just going to feel more stuck. And so you know, if you if you feel like you're sinking stop, like, like they say, quicksand, like stop trying to fight your way out and find something and someone to hold on to. And the rest will come after that.

Hylke Faber 50:26

Have you ever? Or maybe I should ask not a black and white question. How have you ever felt tempted to go back to the things that you actually don't really value? But yeah, would be nice. Now, the BMW metaphor?

Sunita Theiss 50:49

Yes, I have. I mean, I have no problem admitting that I'm, what I'm, what we're doing is not easy. If we had more financial margin, I'm sure things would be easier. If we had a more typical life, it would make social conversations a little bit easier. I can't tell you how many times I'm out with my kids in the middle of the day when everybody else's kids are in school, and someone's like, oh, you homeschool would like do you work? And I'm like, Yeah, I also work. And I'm the sort of confused look that that comes across people's faces. It'd be so much easier if I was like, Yes, I work at x Corporation, my child attends this elementary school. But just because it's hard, doesn't mean it's not good. And, and so yeah, we talked about it. When we first started homeschooling, my husband was like, I'm not sure you're happy. Like this isn't giving you joy. And I said, this is just really hard. Like, I've never done this before. And so now, you know, we're almost two years in and it feels hard in different ways, but it is more enjoyable. And so, again, having having someone to say I'm noticing that you're having a tough time has helped a lot. And I've said maybe it maybe I'm not cut out for this, maybe I need to just go back into an office and do what I know. And then I'll help but that's not really like, what is important on what I feel called to do.

Hylke Faber 52:24

As we're slowly but actually very fast getting to the end part of our conversation, which is happening very incredibly fast. I'm curious about what are you called into going forward because I sense you have developed such a innate capacity to be truthful and stand on your own two feet. And I mean, that seems to be like a family capacity that you've developed and honed and nurtured and practiced in probably by now 1000s off check ins and all these life experiences you've had already. So as you're walking, what do you call towards it? Like what's important to you in these next few years.

Sunita Theiss 53:19

And my first priority is still creating sort of a space for my family. I wrote a mission statement for my parenting journey. I'm it's to make to ensure that my family feels safe seen heard and loved. And so



that is the thing i i see myself continuing to, to lean into for the rest of my life. But the other thing I've I've felt sort of a pull to is to figure out how to be a friend to someone else on this journey to be able to come alongside other people who are maybe saying, you know, I think I want to take a pause in my career or I want to downshift I prefer the word downshift to like taking a break or just being a stay at home mom because it's it's so much more complex and nuanced than that. But um, and so one of the things I've been reflecting on for four months now is just how can I do that? How can I offer that to the people around me that that maybe have only been told this is there's one way to do this and be successful? And they're starting to ask that question of like, but is this the only way and so I don't know what that will look like but I'd really like to find a way to just sit with people in this season and not even have answers for them but just like help them feel seen. Help them feel connected to something bigger than themselves.

Hylke Faber 54:48

A downshift doula I'm

Sunita Theiss 54:50

hearing I actually love that phrase. downshift doula.

Hylke Faber 54:54

And what I'm I'm hearing is their search. It's revolutionary. It's revolutionary. Because I don't hear much in the news about what do we do? What did we do less this year? Yeah. How we contracted this year? What have we let go off this year and celebrate that, knowing that we're doing this because we're doing it to celebrate and home, what's truly important to us. And I love your family mission statement to make sure my family feels heard, seen and felt

Sunita Theiss 55:35

safe seen heard and left yet safe,

Hylke Faber 55:36

seen, heard and loved, safe, seen, heard and laughed? What a beautiful mission statement. That is. And I'm sure if would you be willing, if people are interested in connecting with you about this, that they connect you on LinkedIn? Is that okay, for Yeah,

Sunita Theiss 55:56

they can reach out on LinkedIn. I have a website that I had previously used just for, like my poetry that I'm trying to reimagine a bit. But there's a contact form there, too. If you go to Sinitta Thai style. com, you can find me, super,

Hylke Faber 56:08

super wonderful, wonderful, thank you for that. So as I'm sitting here, I, I kind of don't want to let you go, I want to sort of sit with you. Because just sitting with you in this conversation I find healing myself



to be in this question. And like what's truly important to me? So let's, let's just conclude with sort of a final a final reflection on this conversation. If you think about, what are you most grateful for, in this journey? What are you most grateful for in this journey?

Sunita Theiss 56:48

I think I'm most grateful for the opportunity to like really deeply get to know my family. And myself, that we've had to be really vulnerable with, I mean, even even my six year old, right, like, a lot of times, like if he was in school every day, I wouldn't get to know Him. And the way he learns the things that he's excited about and the way he experiences the world in the same way. And so I'm just grateful for that time, and the like, already deep insight we have into each other. And I'm grateful that we have more of it ahead of us.

Hylke Faber 57:26

Thank you for that. Grateful to really, really get to know each other, and ourselves. What a blessing that as well. So many insights from this conversation. So he does we're getting to the end. Few things that are right now present to me are, be clear about who gets a vote. Be clear about what's truly important to you. Don't go into the grief of Letting Go by yourself. Ask for help. And be clear that the things that you truly value might not be valued by those around you immediately, and at the same time probably are valued by them as well. So thank you so much. I couldn't have wished for a better end of year rude and wavering conversations. Sunita, thank you so much for being here today.

Sunita Theiss 58:24

Thank you so much. This was wonderful. Thank

Hylke Faber 58:27

you and for all those who are listening. Thank you for being with us in ruins and unwavering today in our episode with Sunita Tice, who we discovered is a home school mom, Marketing and Communication Consultant. And also a downshift, doula, as we learned in this conversation and many other things, who do you give a vote in your life what's important to you? Next time, we'll be here with another wonderful human being and leader Vince menciona, who is a formal former GM at Microsoft and founder of a company called The Ultimate partner who is all about helping people to connect more deeply to themselves in a partner ecosystem and also living His truth in his own way. So I look forward to that conversation next time. If you enjoy these conversations and simply want to listen to more of them, you can find them on Apple and Spotify and everywhere else. And of course it also recordings on LinkedIn and YouTube and other places. Well, that's it for this year. And for this episode. Thank you again for listening. You've been listening to root and unwavering where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. See you next time. I'm your host SoCal Faber. Thank you.

Presenter 59:55

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