

Ep #40: Becoming Your Favorite You with Dr. Melissa Parsons



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

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Welcome to Episode #40. This is your host, Kristi Angevine, and this episode is an interview with pediatrician and fellow Deep Dive Certified Coach, Dr. Melissa Parsons. Melissa is an individual one-on-one coach, and she's the host of the new podcast, *Your Favorite You*.

As you can hear in our conversation, she's passionate about helping her clients become what she terms, “their favorite version of themselves,” by treating themselves like they would treat their best friend.

In this episode, we talk about this very thing. As well as, B- work, what's involved in deliberately cultivating an intentional relationship with yourself, as well as, how Melissa, a pediatrician for over 20 years, found coaching, left medicine, and made coaching her vocation. I hope you enjoy.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do. And now, here's your host physician and Master Certified Life Coach Kristi Angevine.

Kristi Angevine: Dr. Melissa Parsons, welcome to the podcast. It is so fun to have you here.

Melissa Parsons: Thank you, Kristi. I'm so happy to be here. It's a pleasure, for sure.

Kristi: I know some of my listeners already either know you personally, or are following the launch of your new podcast, *Your Favorite You*, or are just, you know, already familiar with you. But there are some people who don't know Dr. Melissa Parsons. So, for those people, can you just share a little bit about who you are?

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Melissa: Yeah, for sure. So, my name is Melissa Parsons. I am a pediatrician by training. I am a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a friend to many. I started in pediatrics long time ago now, in 2002. And actually, found coaching in 2018, and became a coach in 2020. I am a life coach for brilliant women. I work with them, one-on-one. I actually retired from my pediatric practice after 22 years, in April of 2021. And, you know, went all in on my coaching business, and have been doing it ever since. And, it's amazing.

Kristi: To give the listeners a little like, sort of a tiny glimpse into where you are in the world, right now. Where are you? And, I see you have a beautiful window there. Like, if you look out your window, you know that question some people ask on interviews, if you look out your window, what do you see?

Melissa: Yeah, right now I live in Columbus, Ohio. I am an Ohio girl from birth. I grew up in a little town west of Cleveland called Elyria. And then, I went to Ohio University, in Athens, for my undergrad. I went to, what was called at the time, Medical College of Ohio, in Toledo for med school. And, met my hubby there. And then, he and I couples matched here, at Ohio State's Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Out my window, right now, I see a beautiful, uncharacteristically warm fall day in Ohio. There are many, many colors, all kinds of oranges, and yellows, and reds and greens. And it's just a beautiful sunny day, which is rare. I am definitely going to be getting outside later today, to take in some nature, because it's one of my favorite things to do.

Kristi: That's wonderful. So, we, here in Central Oregon, have had the a characteristically warm, you know, temperatures in the 70's and 80's. And it's kind of that diurnal flow, where it's really cool in the morning and, you know, 30-degree fluctuations to warm.

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Melissa: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Kristi: And just yesterday, I was coming back home from being at a retreat conference. And so, my husband was getting the kids out the door to school. But yesterday, it went back to where it should be. And so, yesterday, it was, all of a sudden, like, mountains are covered in snow, it's 30° in the morning.

And we realized that, as my husband called it, 'a change of season clothes crisis.' Because through the summer we didn't really realize that all the pants, that are in our house, are now highwater. So, there were highwaters and like, funky layers going on yesterday, because now it is back to cold, so.

Melissa: Yeah. Oh, been there, done that, for sure with my boys. Where it's like; oh, shoot these shorts worked well, but now these pants are no longer pants.

Kristi: That's so good. All right. So, you were, essentially, invested in the world of being a pediatrician for, we can say decades, plural.

Melissa: Yeah, plural decades.

Kristi: So, how is it that a pediatrician, who's very much in that world, not just, you know there, for a year, or two, or five, but twenty years, find coaching, decide to become a coach, start her own business, and have a successful coaching practice? Like, how did that happen for you?

Melissa: I realized, recently, that I have a lot of thoughts that I have been lucky, and that it has been a fluke. And that feels terrible, because it feels like it is not sustainable, it is not recreatable. And my very astute coach, Maggie Reyes, has pointed out to me over and over again, like, "No, this

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has been sustained action that you have been taking, because your thoughts about yourself are pretty powerful.”

So, I think, to kind of go back and answer your question, I loved being a pediatrician. One of the greatest honors of my coaching business has been some of the moms who have hired me as a coach, when I was no longer their pediatrician. They were like, “Move over kids, Dr. Parsons is mom’s now,” you know, that type of thing. So, that’s been a huge, huge honor.

I found coaching in 2017. I was on PMG, Physicians Moms Group, on Facebook®. Which was created, as you and I know, by the amazing Hala Sabry. I kept seeing things on there about Katrina Ubell’s Weight Loss for Doctors Only. And at the time, I had created this amazing life for myself. And I was like, my weight is the thing that like, I can’t figure out why I cannot make this change and sustain it. And, you know, that type of thing.

So, I started listening, actually, it was the day after Christmas. I was driving home from Cleveland to Columbus, and started listening to Dr. Ubell’s podcast. The boys and the dog all went with John in his vehicle, and I had the vehicle to myself. Which, as anyone who’s a mom knows, like, that’s a mom jackpot moment. Where you get to have a two-hour drive with no kids, no dog. You get to listen to whatever you want.

Now, I started listening to Katrina’s podcast, and my thought was... And I love Katrina, she was my coach. “How did this bitch get into my brain? Like, this woman is in my brain. She knows my thoughts. Her thoughts are my thoughts.” I just couldn’t get enough of it. I started binging on the podcast.

She was starting a cohort that January, pretty quickly after I found her podcast, and I was like, “I need to do this.” I had no idea what coaching was, I didn’t know what it was for someone like me. It’s kind of a long story, but I’ll tell it.

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I went to her webinar. And, you know, on her webinar... I just now found out that she was really nervous before this webinar; you would have never known, to see her. So, she was such a shining example of what's possible and still is for me. I went to her webinar, and I had told my hubby that I was considering doing this, because we had kind of talked about it. He's a pulmonary critical care doctor, and he had to be an ICU the next morning, it was on a Sunday night.

And he was like, "I'm gonna go to bed." And I was like, "Okay, well, I'm going to do this. Unless it's like crazy, you know, overly expensive or whatever." You know, she didn't come to the price until the end, and she said it was \$5K, for six months. And I was like, "I need to sign up for this tonight," because there's only so many spots or whatever.

So, I went in, and I poked John, and I said, "It's \$5,000." And he was like, "Okay, whatever," and rolled over. I was like, "Okay; that was easy." So, my heart's beating out of my chest. I put my visa number into the thing, you know, click purchase or whatever, and go to bed.

The next morning, he wakes up and he's like, "\$5,000?!" I was like, "You said it was okay." And he was like, "Oh my goodness, Melissa." But he's my biggest fan and my biggest supporter. He believes in me way before I believe in myself.

So, I did it. I rearranged my schedule. I was very dedicated to showing up for her coaching calls, because at the time, they were kind of all over the place. Like, one week it would be Tuesday at 2:00, and the next week, it would be, you know, Friday at 9am. And then, it would be in an evening.

I basically went to my partners and my office manager, and I said, "You know, I'm doing this, and I need to block my schedule so that I can make it to these calls." I did it. I would take the calls, and I would go into one of my patient rooms and sit there and do the calls. It was nice.

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I would go and sit out in my car, go sit out on the patio at the back of the office, and that type of thing. I was dedicated and committed to it. And she, I mean, that coaching changed my life. Like, the idea that my thoughts created my feelings, and that my thoughts ultimately created my results. Like, I had never heard that before. And I mean, it was just, it was totally life changing.

I really used that six months to change my relationship with myself. And then, at the end of it, I was like, “Okay, I need to... The next relationship that I want to work on, is one with my hubs.” Because our relationship was good, but I knew what could be better. We were, you know, we had been together for over 20 years, at this point. And we're kind of having the same fight over and over, and reaching the same conclusion, and like, not moving forward.

So, I asked Katrina. I was like, “Who would you hire as marriage coach?” And she gave me a couple of names. I don't know what the other ones were, because I saw Maggie Reyes' stuff, and I hired her pretty quickly. I was very dedicated to that coaching, too. Like, I showed up.

And now that I think about it, I sent Maggie my thoughts; I made the commitment to do a thought download every day, and send her my thoughts for six months. I'm sure she was like, she'll deny it, but I'm sure she was like, “Oh, my God, here comes Melissa's like, word vomit again. I have to coach this woman every day for six months.”

But at the end of that, you know, she said, “I think that you've done great work here. Your self-coaching is more powerful than a lot of the coaching I see, of coaches in the industry who've been doing it for years. And, you should consider becoming a coach.”

I think at that point, I had been in practice for 20 years, and I wasn't having to use my brain much anymore, in pediatrics. And I was like, “What an

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awful thing to waste.” Like, I mean, obviously, I was using my brain. I was using all the stuff that I've learned over 20 years, and it was very easy for me to come to conclusion. And when I was having to use my brain, it was to give families bad news, or it had just kind of lost its overarching appeal for me, I think.

Even though I loved working with certain families, and I loved working with my partners and nurses, and that type of thing. I hadn't even considered that there was another life possible for me, outside of being a doctor.

I mean, I had wanted to be a doctor since I was nine years old. So, you know, and I had, like, had that dream, and I had made it happen. And I was like, “You know, it's possible that there's another dream out there for me. And that it's okay for me to have, just something completely different.”

Then, Maggie pointed out, she's like, “Melissa, you've always been a coach, you just haven't been calling yourself that. You've been coaching parents, you've been coaching teens, you're just not using that moniker.”

Kristi: Alright, so what you just shared with this entire journey, from listening to the Katrina Ubell's podcast, hiring her as a coach, blocking out your schedule, radically transforming your relationship with yourself. And then, deciding to, sounds like, deliberately work on relationships, you know, that came from that, is really powerful.

I love that you went through all the details of that, because sometimes we don't know how people do this. And you, basically, pulled back the curtain. I think what was, what I want to highlight, is that you were really, on purpose, showing up for yourself. As opposed to, just sort of on default, showing up in the way that you've done for 5, 10, 15, 20 years.

Melissa: Yeah, for other people.

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Kristi: For other people first. And not just other people first, but other people... Like, it sounds like a little bit of neglect of you, right? Like, we can still show up for other people, if we'd like to, but when we sort of don't even know who we are, or don't pay attention to us, that's when it can, it can be more exhausting, right?

Melissa: Yeah, I say this to my clients all the time. They'll say that they're doing something for their family, and I'm like, "Well, you realize that you are also part of your family. And that, like, so many light bulbs. Like, "Oh, yeah."

Kristi: Like, I'm part of my family. I think, at the heart of what you're saying, is when you are committed to that awareness of what is, oftentimes, not articulated, then you can see it better. I mean when you're sending a thought download... Which, for people who don't know what that means, that's just basically writing down your thoughts or typing out your thoughts.

When you do that every single day for six months, the awareness that comes to the light for the things that we just don't really pay attention to sometimes, we don't always have to, is huge.

Melissa: Yeah, it was incredible.

Kristi: So, you have a new podcast. Everybody who's listening to this, once you're done with this episode, now that you've heard some of her backstory, if you haven't already, you should go listen to it. It's called *Your Favorite You*. Is that correct? Did I get that right?

Melissa: That's correct. You got it right.

Kristi: So, one of the things, that when I was listening to it, that I know my listeners love hearing about, is that concept of B- work. And how, you know, from the overarching concept of perfectionism, the B- work aspect is

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something that can really make those of us who have always been high achievers, and have sort of like, 'it's always better to be better. And there's something wrong and I must go fix it.'

When we have that mindset, we can bristle at B-. In a lot of people's minds it's mediocre.

Melissa: At best.

Kristi: Right. So, can you talk a little bit about what B- means? And, what's scary about it?

Melissa: Yeah. It's so interesting, because, you know, when I was thinking about being on your podcast, I was like, most of the habits that I have formed in the past four years, the ones that I have consistently showed up for over and over again, the biggest one is showing up for coaching. Like, every week, showing up, doing the work, that type of thing. And that has helped me to drop some of the habits that I had, that were holding me back.

And the first one, for sure, is perfectionism. I actually said on Katrina's, like, one of the first calls, I was like, "I want to be the valedictorian of this cohort." She was like, "Well, we're gonna drop that thought right now." I mean, that was the mindset that I went into everything with; that I had to be number one. And, that I was going to show that I was committed. And, I wanted to be the one who had the biggest Delta in their change.

Now, it's just like; oh, nobody likes that person who is pretending to be perfect all the time. Because none of us are. Actually, people like me in my authenticity. And I think, that just showing my clients, over and over and over again, that it's safe. I think, I'm pretty sure, it's Edith Eger, that says, "It takes courage to be average." It does.

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Because we've been taught that achievement, attention, like all the things that we have been taught, are the keys to success and the keys to other people liking us, and the keys to living a happy life. And I think that people get a little bit afraid when you start talking about this, because so much of our identity is tied up in being the valedictorian, and if that's not the way to do life, then what? I've been doing it wrong the whole time?

Kristi: Right. Especially when you can see, when you sort of do the inventory, looking back, and you go; but wait a second, my drive... Like, when you have the thought; it was because of my drive that everything that I have today was created. What do you mean changing that? Does that mean that, you know, either I was all wrong, or all the good things will go away? Because how can I shift.... You know, that all-or-none, right?

But I love that you mentioned safety. Because when it feels safe to feel included, and liked. This is kind of a universal thing, with the exception of narcissists, sort of the extreme versions of sociopaths, etc. When we get a sense of safety because we are liked, we're included, and we think; oh, that's because I showed up perfectly. The idea of altering that can feel really disconcerting.

Melissa: Yeah, and I think, what I have come to and what I try to teach people, over and over again, is I have learned, over the past four years, how to belong to me, instead of trying to fit in to other groups. If I belong to me, and by that, I mean I always have my own back.

I'm constantly looking for; okay, like, where are my thoughts getting in my way here? Why am I not willing to feel that feeling? Like, if I get to know myself on a deeper and deeper level...

First of all, I'm never lonely; I love my solitude and I love being by myself. I can go into any group of people that I choose, and I don't have to fit in; I can just be myself. And the people that are for me will be attracted to me,

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and want to hang out. And the people who are not for me will be repelled, and that's okay. I'm not supposed to be for everybody. I'm not supposed to people-please or be perfect, in order to try to fit in.

Kristi: Yeah, and I think that's such an important aspect of what you were saying earlier. When you're were saying, you know, people don't like, basically, butting up against the lie of perfectionism in another person. And I think, what's even more important, is we don't feel that sense of, I like me when we're doing that.

And so, what really matters, is like you said, when we can create our own sense of belonging, our own sense of love for ourselves. Then, I mean, this sounds cold , but it doesn't really matter if somebody likes you or doesn't like you. It could be icing on the cake because you meet somebody you have so much fun with; how cool.

But if entire room of people is like; meh, not so big of a deal. They don't like you. Don't like that she says all the expletives. I don't know about that. Then, it's not unsafe, because you like you, you belong to you. And you know how to, on purpose, cultivate thoughts and beliefs for yourself that help that.

Melissa: So good. Yup, agreed, rubber-stamped.

Kristi: So, this is like, this is so funny. This wasn't my plan for this to segue so nicely into one of the things that you mentioned on your podcast, the idea of treating yourself like your own best friend. And, I love that idea. Because for so many of us, who, you know, either are perfectionist and know it. Or, are perfectionist but don't know it, because we think that perfectionists are perfect, and we're not perfect. So, we can't have that mindset, but we really do. Right? There are so many of us.

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It's so easy to have self-compassion, warmth, and love for others. Most of the time it comes super naturally; what do you need? Oh my gosh, that must be so hard. Oh, I get it. And so, it's easy to do that, to have that best friend mentality for our partner, our kids, our patients, our neighbor. But doing it for yourself....

Melissa: Strangers.

Kristi: For strangers. Oh my gosh, so easy, right? Anyways, but having that for ourselves, I think, is a habit that takes intention. So, what do you think about that?

Melissa: Oh, yeah, absolutely. And, you know, I often think about how I used to talk to myself all the time. Now, this is not to say that I don't have negative thoughts about myself, because I do, and I think they're healthy to have.

But like, whenever I put it through my best friend lens, like, if my best friend for 35 years, Alicia, were to call me with this same issue, like, what would I say to her? And, why am I not saying that to myself? Like, what is the harm in me giving myself that same love, compassion, grace, like all those things?

I think that we have this thought that if we are compassionate, and loving, and graceful with ourselves, we'll just give up and stop wanting to achieve anything. And just become these sloths who do nothing. It just doesn't happen that way, right? It just frees up more time for you to do the things that actually do light you up, and do give you, you know, just make you more of who you are. Make you more of your favorite you.

Kristi: That reminds me of that concept of; what if all that you've created for yourself, that you've achieved, wasn't because of your drive, anxiety, perfectionism, but despite that. It was sort of a copilot, and maybe it

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contributed some good things. And yet, when it's removed, you free up so much space, right? Like, there is so much less energy spent with shame, and beating yourself up, and second guessing, and compare and despair.

When that goes away, then it's like; oh, I don't become the sloth belly up, you know, eating bonbons, drunk on the couch watching, you know, something, I don't even know what I'm watching. I, actually, can be more like you said. So.

I want to highlight something you said, that is really important for everybody listening. You pointed out, when you think; okay, what would I say to my best friend? I think the biggest, most important thing of that is; what would I say? And, why am I not?

Each one of us is gonna have a different reason why we don't? What's the thing that feels risky about that? What's the... What is that? I think once you understand why you don't, then it becomes so much more natural to do it. You know, it's not like I'm gonna force myself to be like; well, this is what I would say to my best friend, so I'm gonna tell myself that now.

Like, when we actually know what's in the way there, and why it's there, how it formed, all the things, right?

Melissa: Yeah, getting to the root of it, so that the next time it happens, you don't have to even ask 'What would I say to my best friend?,' it just kind of comes. Because that becomes the new neural pathway, and the new habit, and that type of thing.

And what I found, for me, is that what used to feel so natural, like beating myself up, and shame and blame, and all of that, like now, when it happens, I feel so uncomfortable. I'm like, this isn't what we do anymore. And it's so enlightening, because it used to just feel so familiar and safe,

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right, only because I had done it for so long. And now, it feels like totally out of control and like, what am I doing?

Kristi: Yeah, so that's such a beautiful, hopeful image to paint for people who, you know, find themselves more in the muck of; well, this is just my familiar existence. And I kind of don't even notice when I'm doing it because that's just my baseline.

There is another way. There's a way to increase your awareness and to recognize it. And for it to actually feel kind of gross and recognize; oh, I could do something differently. And as you go through that, my bias is that when we catch ourselves, beating ourselves up, that one of the best things is to be like; okay, even though this feels yucky, or even though I do it habitually, and don't even notice it. It makes sense that I do that.

Sometimes that's that middle ground of like; I see you. And it makes sense that I'm doing this to myself, because I've done it for 20, 30, 40, 50 years. So of course, I'm doing it. But there's a good reason I'm doing it. What might that be? And those little thoughts, right?

Melissa: Always figuring out why it makes sense; always, always, always. It's we don't do things, unless we have [inaudible] like you were saying, against ourselves. Like, we just don't. It always has been to help us in some way. And figuring out; okay, that may have served me in the past, but it is no longer helpful.

Kristi: Yeah, exactly. Well, so this brings me to, I heard this lovely quote on your podcast, and you said something to the effect of, "The beauty of working with a coach, is I will always see you as your favorite version of you." And that really resonated with me, because, I think, when you have an outsider... We can see this in our friends, right? Our friends can see the best in us. We can, so easily, see what's possible for our friends.

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And when we have a coach who just naturally assumes we're 100% worthy, 100% infinitely capable, and can see our favorite version of us. They see it and they help us sort of identify what's in the way, between us, you know, and our lesser favorite state. And the us that is our favorite state. It's just such a beautiful match. And you work primarily one-on-one with clients, right?

Melissa: And yes, yeah, I work one-on-one with brilliant women who are superheroes. I already know that they're superheroes, in the best sense of the word, before we even start working together. And my job, as I see it, is to ask them brilliant questions, so that they can find the answers for themselves, and figure out that they actually are already amazing, lovable, worthy. All the beautiful words that you mentioned.

Kristi: Well, so, how can my listeners learn more about you? Find your podcast, find your website, do a consult call to work with you?

Melissa: Yeah, thanks for asking. My website is MelissaParsonsCoaching.com. If you want to schedule a consult, you just go there and there's a tab at the top, you can click on "Work with Me." And click on "Book Now," my calendar will come up; you can book a consult call.

My podcast, you can also find via my web page. You can find it on any podcast platform; *Your Favorite You*. I'm on Instagram @CoachMelissaParsonsMD. I'm on Facebook; Melissa Parsons Coaching. So, I'm everywhere. I'm also on LinkedIn.

Kristi: So good. We will link all of that in the show notes, so for anybody who's driving or exercising, you don't have to remember all that. But you can remember Melissa Parsons; you Google it, you'll find her. But you can also just click on the show notes, and you'll see her there.

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So, I have a feeling that if we had three hours and we could record like, 17 podcasts, all in a row, we would have no problem coming up with things to say, things to talk about. Because, you know, we share a background in our life coach training and our deep dive coach certification. And, I think, we could go on forever.

But in the, you know, for the benefit of staying on target, I think we'll wrap up now. Is there anything that we missed? Anything that you'd want to share, as we wrap up?

Melissa: No. I think that the one thing that I do want to say, is that so many of the people that come to you, I'm sure, and so many of the people that come to me, think that they need to be doing more, in terms, of you know, doing life correctly.

And just the idea, that it's possible that instead of doing more, you start doing things on purpose, or you start calling out the things that aren't serving you anymore. Instead of trying to add more things to your life, kind of how we alluded to earlier, it just opens up a lot of space for what actually does align with your values, and what really matters to you in life. So, that's the only thing, I think.

Kristi: Well, that's a fun little invitation that we can have. For people who are listening right now, how about your invitation for the week, in terms of something really concrete and practical you can do. So, you can just watch...

And you can tell me what do you think about this, Melissa. Like, an option A for Kristi, an option B for Melissa's task; you can just start noticing if there's something that you're doing or spending time with, that maybe doesn't totally light you up, and does seem like something that is cut out-able. Or, you know, something that you could remove.

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You could just notice it. You don't necessarily have to; I'm not saying you have to start doing it now. But you could just imagine; what if I removed this? What would that open up for me? What thing could I do less of, this week?

I like to tell people to try one tiny thing and experiment, to see what happens with you in the world. Does the work...

Melissa: Yeah, you can always pick it back up. You can always start it up again. It's no problem.

Kristi: And it doesn't necessarily have to be like; well, I just don't feel like picking up my kids from school. I mean, it doesn't have to be that, right? Because there could be repercussions.

Melissa: The pediatrician in me says, "That's a no."

Kristi: Exactly. We're not suggesting something that just because you don't like it, you remove it. But you could consider; what are the things that, maybe, don't light me up? That could be things I could do less with? And what might that be like? Anything else you would add to that?

Melissa: I don't think so. I've been thinking a lot lately, about my top three values, and how I try to align my top three values. So, what I would say, is maybe, as you're doing stuff, ask yourself; is this in alignment with who I want to be? Or, is this more in alignment with who I've always been?

Kristi: So good. That is so good. Perfect, simple question to ask yourself this week or this month. All right. Well, thank you so much for coming on. We'll definitely have to do this again. And, it was so great to chat with you.

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Melissa: Yeah. Thank you for having me. I'm definitely going to have you on *Your Favorite You* if you're open. Like, I don't want you people-pleasing me. But...

Kristi: Don't worry, that sounds beautiful. I love it.

Melissa: All right. Thanks, Kristi.

If you want to learn more about how to better understand your habits, stop feeling reactionary, and get back into the proverbial driver's seat with your habits, you'll want to join my email list. Which you can find linked in the show notes. Or, if you go to habitsonpurpose.com, you'll find it right there.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit www.habitsonpurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.