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Why You Do the Work You Do

Introduction

Welcome to Remembering to Be Me, a podcast that helps you find your own way to a place of authenticity and service of others in a world that is ever changing. I am your host, Jenn Shallvey and I invite you to join me on a journey of reflection, insight, and wisdom, as well as be challenged into growth and change. The choice is always yours. I simply hold the space, and offer an invitation and support you in the process. As you find your own way to balance the ups and downs, be rewarded with freedom, contentment, happiness, acceptance, peace of mind, and clarity. Trust yourself, discover more of the real you and share your wonderful, amazing whole self with the rest of the world. This is not always easy. So, start with this simple message to yourself, "Be me, and when I forget, remember to be me."

Main podcast

Hi, this is Jenn Shallvey and welcome back to the Remembering to Be Me podcast today. I am starting with the first episode in the series I have called changing the work you do. And with the next five episodes, what I want to do is take you through a topic that leads you on the journey of changing the work you do. And I will give you some discussion, some ideas, some questions to think about, and then I'm going to suggest an activity that you might do in your own time. I'll also include at the end of the episode, just a general message from my own reflection of what I think would be useful to share with you. And lastly, a takeaway question for your contemplation. So let's begin today with why do you do the work you do? A very big topic. Massive. I know I'm trying to cover a topic that probably could be a whole entire podcast, right?

So today is simply to get you started. Because I feel that in all the insights and work that I have looked at that your why is most important. Knowing that will always guide you and take you in the direction that you want to go in.

So what do I mean by why? This is a word that has a lot of connotation in the personal development field there are heaps of people that will talk about your why, finding your purpose, finding your goal in life, things like that. And I love all that and that I think it's great to have like a personal mission, a personal vision, all that really important. For the purposes of changing the work that you do let's get to a why that ties into that.

So I'm going to interchange the words that relate to that in many ways. So it could be your direction that you take could be purpose your mission, your goal aim, being a you'll hear me say those. At another deeper level, it could be a calling that you feel you have or knowing or a pull, all of these things, or all these words I should say are interchangeable because they're really driving at a personal sense of why you do the work you do. And that is the essence of what I want you to get when you think about the questions and do the activities from today.

Do you have a sense of direction in terms of the work you do? Is there in what you do, a pull or a, a reason that makes some sort of sense to you or a knowing that in your gut that you go, well, this is why I'm doing this. I just feel it's right for me.

I have a sense that why will come up as more of a qualitative than a quantitative assessment. I don't feel like why you do the work you do is going to be the answer from a quiz you take or a



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questionnaire. It doesn't work like that. So it's about the sense you have of why you do what you do. And what's interesting about this is in everything that we do in terms of work, there's multiple layers and reasons of why we do the work we're doing. It might start off simply as I need a paycheck and I want income to pay for X, Y Z. And that is on the most basic level a why you do the work you do.

In this episode. I want to go beyond that. I want us to go to the extra levels above that. So I'm going to take it granted, an assumption that we work in this world generally, to earn an income so that we can pay for our living. That's generally what happens in the way the current world works. We could also step out of that and say, in terms of the work you do that it's not necessarily always for pay. It might be that you're doing it in a pro bono sense. It may also be that you're volunteering. And so some people they're doing that work, but they're doing it through a volunteer position. There's no financial reward, but there are many other rewards. So maybe we can even step back even further and say, why do you do the work you do irrespective of the type and nature of rewards you get in exchange for that. So you can see how I'm opening up even bigger now. Just to think about you existing on this earth, in this body, in this place right now, why do you do the work you do? No matter what it is.

So why is this worth considering? Why would I dedicate a whole episode to this topic? Well, there's two reasons. One, I think it guides your choices in life. When you're really clear about the why in terms of work, then when things present to you or opportunities or decisions, you'll have a much easier time of making a choice about that. The execution might be different, but the actual decision around whether you do it, whether you don't do it or how, and all that will be a lot easier when you're clear about your why. And then also I feel that knowing your, why ties into your values, they're separate and they're different. And your values are whole different exercise that are independent of this series that we're talking about. I'm going to put in here that assuming, you know, what your values are, and you have a sense of those. This will help partner with that and give you a direction that allows those values to be exercised. And I think that's really important. So you've got a sense of that now, don't you?

So can your why change over time? Can you actually have a why that starts out as one thing and then morphs into another later on in your life? And I think it can. I'm only saying that because I've been working with this type of work for a long time, and when I see a person going through transition, one of the things that might change is the why or their awareness and realisation of what that why is changes.

So what are some of the factors that might affect your answer? Well, age is one thing, a person who's just starting out in their life of work will have very limited experience as to what they like and don't like, and what resonates with them and where their skills and talents are matching up with what they do. And the motivation factor might be more around, oh, I'm so excited to be working in this new organisation and being out in the workplace after graduating from high school or from university or something that the why is a very different type of why. But inside that is a motivation factor. And so over time, as we grow in age, we gain more insight and it just evolves and iterates over that time.

Another factor would be a life event. So imagine that we all have lots of life events, some of them are quite challenging and some of them are, are what I would say transformative, just because



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they're exciting. So for example, let's say on the exciting side of things, you decided to take a year off work and do sabbatical and travel around the world, went to all these different countries, saw lots of different cultures and you've come back a whole different person. Because your values were challenged. Your sense of the world was changed and doing the work that you were doing before didn't match up anymore. That could be an example. A life event that probably not so happy would be maybe having a major health scare or a major health crisis that you have to work yourself through. And that would be really challenging. And it would probably give you a lot of time to reflect and consider what matters in life. And that would have unending impact on the way you would express that in the work you do.

Also, there are influences in the world in which you circulate, think about the network of people. Another one or another factor I should say is culture where you live and how you're raised will impact the sense you have of work. What does it mean for you? And so in that context, it will definitely impact your sense of why you do the work you do. So think about that as something that will be very personal to you, and very different, depending on your background.

And lastly, I think the factor of experiences in life, as you have different experiences, whether they're work-related or not work-related will affect the way your, why changes over time. And as you grow in age, it's not necessarily that you grow a sense of purpose. I feel that it matters if you do personal insight work, if you do personal development, if you take the time out to say, what matters to me, why am I doing this? If you're not going to ask those questions, then you're probably not going to be paying much attention to it.

So right now, irrespective of that, you may have a loose sense of your why, and all of a sudden is going to become clearer. And so, as you can sense from what I've just said around the changing of your why the two main factors are internal and external, and you'll see that your values and beliefs will affect you as will the external people in the environment. And they all come together in a big, huge, melting pot of information and experience and outcomes, your why. And that's why I say it can change over time.

So now the question I have, and I want you to consider is, is your why yours or another person's? And the reason why I asked that is because a lot of people start off their career or work path based on the influence of others especially when they're young, impressionable in high school, I can think of my career oriented conversations. I can think of others. I know my own children, my husband's everybody who I've talked to in my circles will all have stories of what it was like to have that initial career conversation. What are you going to do when you finish high school? Or what are you going to do when you move on from school? Or what do you do when you go to university? And often there would be an assessment process and some sort of feedback, and there'd be a very small, I'd say limited amount of time dedicated to giving feedback and saying, well, here's where your personality and skills seem to match. And I used the word seem because exactly that is what happens. It's not an accurate match. It's a possibility. And it's a possibility based on a system that said, well, these are the kinds of people that we think work in these types of roles.

Now, if you follow that, I was going to be a marine biologist when I was in high school. And am I one now? No. I like the water and the ocean and things like that, but that's probably not where I wanted to be. But that was what my career guidance was sending me down the path to do. And I've got



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many other examples, but I won't share them because they're personal from other people. But just think back to when you first started getting a sense of the type of work you wanted to do and how other people may have influenced that choice.

And then as you progressed, think about also the reason why you took a job or work or did something in the beginning versus now. Many of us may have started off doing the work we did purely to get some cash in our pocket so that we could go off and do something. My first job was I think, sixth grade I was babysitting and it was simply so I could afford to get something that I wanted. And it was a, it was a job, not because I was passionate about being a babysitter, but it was my first way of getting cash from someone other than my parents. I think all of us have a story like that, where you can go back and say, when did I first do work? And I could also go back to my first volunteer work. And even that was because everybody else was doing it so I went along with it. It wasn't because I wanted to do it. So you got to go back and say, when was I first doing the work I did and why? Our reasons are so different and they can so easily be influenced by other people.

So when did it start to become your choice? When did your reason for doing what you do in work begin to emerge as clearly from within you and a representation of your own insight and your own passion and your own motivation? When did that start to happen? And that's the kind of question I want you to think about, about is your why yours or another person's and how has that changed over time?

And the last thing I want you to think about before I move into the activity is what I call the 'Joy Factor'. And it's exactly what it sounds like. And I'm not trying to make something cute or fun, just simply it came out as that, when I planned this episode to say, what's your joy factor in the work you do. Because if you can understand that it's going to bring you back to why you do the work you do. So when you think about your work, when are you in a state of joy or having fun or enjoying it? And a great indicator of that is do you ever laugh when you're doing the work you're doing? Or do you ever have a good chuckle, even serious work? People have fun at times. Some of the jobs that people have, I know are really challenging. But there's still a part of it where they can find relief. So I want to know, do you get joy in the outcome or the experience or what you've done for somebody else? Do you feel good in that? Can you connect to that idea of a joy factor about actually experiencing that in the work you do? And as you can look at that, can you notice what influences the factor? Where does the joy come from? What is it that happens within you that makes something joyful or not?

And that's a really big distinction because that's going to help, you know, what environmental factors, what work factors, what choices you make will influence the expression of your why and allows you to do that. So look for the joy factor in the work you do. What is it that comes up for you?

Okay, let's move on to an activity. So I've picked an activity that I felt would be comprehensive and also set you up for some of the other episodes. This is a really good one to get started in this one. And I'm calling it a timeline review, but it can be, you can have a fancy name. I don't have one. It's just a timeline review. And my goal here is to help you use your life so far as content to evaluate and find insight around what your, why is rather than asking you the question what do you think your purpose is in life? I don't want to go to the direct question. I want you to discern that and discover that by looking at actually how you have done the work you've done in your life.



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So the first thing to do is get a big piece of paper. The bigger, the better, really huge is fantastic. So I have one of those A3 pads on my desk. That's probably not even big enough. So if you have to take some A4 or letter paper together and make a big, giant thing of paper so that you can have lots of space to write what you want to write on it. And what I want you to do is draw down the middle of the page, horizontally a big line that just goes down the middle of the page, equal to the top, equal to the bottom of the page. And so it splits the page in two, and we'll have this section above the line and a section below the line. That's your mid point horizon that's equal.

And now I want you to look at that line and say that the beginning left side is the first time you did work and you can choose what the nature of that is. Whether it's volunteer, whether it's for money, whether it's a job, whether you're employed, you choose. That first point in time of working, doing the work you do. And then at the other end is now. And we're going to cut this off at the present point in time. I don't want to do this exercise for the future. It is going to be from the past initial point of working all the way to now. And then I want you to start putting little marks on the timeline that are significant to you. And try and space that out on the timelines for that the distance between them represents time. So you can think that if you divided that timeline into the amount of time, you've worked, make sure there are equal distances between time.

And start to think about different points in your career, your work non-work, whatever it is, and write down the actual work you did, just a little notation. This is for your benefit. No one sees this. So you could have code words. You could have abbreviation. It doesn't matter. Just somehow so that you can look at that and stand back and go, oh, there was that time, there was that one. There was that one.

Okay. So when you finished doing that, you should have a nice horizontal line with lots of little indications of work you've done. Now, you might be somebody who's worked in the same job for a long time. I would look deeper into that and say, well, have you changed your role? Have you changed titles? Have you changed levels of management? Think about those things. Okay. And begin to put that together and come up with a really good sense that you could describe the timing of your work. Okay. You've got that. You can always add to this. If you have more that come up.

Now, we're going to do two things. We're going to go back and look at all of those points in time. And we're now going to try and indicate next to each of them what your, why was? So go back for example, the very first work you ever did and ask yourself, why did I do the work I did for that? And it could be simply I wanted some money to go buy a bicycle? I don't know, just pick whatever it is. It was to earn money, just to get cash, to buy XYZ. I was travelling to Europe. I wanted to save money for Europe. Very clear that your why for that job or that work was simply to get the money to go somewhere, right?

You might even go deeper than that and say, well, why did I choose that over another? And maybe you could say, well, that's all I could actually do with my skills at that time. So you see there's lots of layers to this. So after each of the little marks on your timeline, there should be a why you did that work. All right. Does that make sense? I hope so.

Now, one more thing to lay over the top of this. So we've got that next to everything. Now I want you to go back and look at your level of joy. So we're now going to impose on this, a filter of your joy



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factor and the way I'm going to do that is I'm going to have you imagine that everything above the line goes up to a scale of five and everything below the line goes down to a scale of negative five.

And the joy factor maximum joy is five. Average joy is three. And then you get to below the line is no joy is five minus five, I should say. And kind of not that joyful is minus three. So you can see where I'm going to have points above and below the line. And it was no different than it's right in the middle. Isn't it. Now, what I want you to do is just get a, a colour, like a highlight or something that you can just mark a dot for now, at each of those points in time where your joy was. So you can even take a job or a point in your career where you spend a lot of time in the same role, and you could even map the joy in that you might have started off really, really loving it. And then by the time you left, it went down to minus three.

That's what I'm talking about. So now you've got all these dots on the page. What you can do now is create a graph line from point to point. And by doing that, you get an idea of when you were in peak moments of joy with your work and when you weren't. And at the end, you can step back now and have three pieces of information on that page. One, each of the key events around the work you've done over the time that you started working, then you have the why next to each, and then you have dots along the way of when you were fully enjoying doing your job. And when you weren't.

And now this is where it gets tricky because you need to step back, even further in your reflection and contemplate that diagram. And you can keep coming back to this because I guarantee it's not a one-off exercise. It's a process that will unlock a lot for you. And then you'll begin to add more. Some will have more weight than others, and you'll begin to get a sense from it.

So there's four questions. I want you to ask yourself when you consider this diagram. Firstly, when was I experiencing the most joy in my work and why. Then the next question, when was I experiencing the least joy in my work and why? And then after that, I want you to ask yourself, how does my, why express itself in these choices over time? And you see a trend, for example. And then lastly, what stands out the most as the trend and signal of my why?

So as you contemplate that information gradually over your reflection, you'll begin to see a pattern. You'll begin to sense something that really speaks to you that was very personal, that begins to express as a why. So consider that insight and hold onto that and see if you can have a sense of what your, why might be. And then once you have that for now, write it down, consider working with that, to see if you can flush that out even further, refine it, see how that feels. Because your why is like a compass guiding you and your choices will have greater clarity. It will help with your decision-making. It will help you get through uncertainty. And it certainly will help you when we start to go through the rest of these episodes to go back to as a sense of point of purpose or extensive direction. So that's an activity that you can do. I really encourage you to do that because before you listen to the next episode, because it will really help and give you some context for that.

Okay. Now, before I finish, I wanted to just give you one last thing. That was just some thoughts to consider. And when I sat down and I just looked at this topic and I went, why do you do the work you do? A lot came up because it's such a big topic. And because I've worked so much with people who want to change the work, they do, it's always a point of reference for me.

So the first thing that came up is career work. It's not static. It's cycle is cyclical. It goes up and down. We go through phases. We go in and out of it, nobody is constant and perfectly aligned all the time



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to exactly what they start doing. So there's no shame or issue at all when you suddenly realise that maybe that's not the work I want to do anymore. Or maybe I need to shift it or change it. That's okay.

Another thing is you really need to take a moment to reconnect with your why to keep checking in, to see, am I still working with that? Because when you only do it at the time you start doing some work, then you may lose sight of that and lose track of it.

Knowing your why is also important because it reconnects you to your heart. If you want to use that as a metaphor. That feeling in your heart of why you do what you do, when you can put your hand on your heart and say, I'm doing this work, because it really means a lot to me because of X, Y, Z. That's a really powerful place to operate from.

Another point that I've considered is knowing your, why is your responsibility, your choice. It's not anybody else's. In fact, if anybody wanted to ask you what your why is, don't have to tell them, that's just for you. It's your own internal motivation, your own internal signal and direction. I do believe that articulating that out of yourself can give you more power and really motivate you, but there's no need to have to tell anybody. And there's no one else who needs to direct that or come up with it for you. If somebody tells you what they think your, why is, I think that's almost arrogant. Another person might give you their view of what your why could be or how they see it or perceive it, but not tell you what your, why should be. So be very careful about that too.

Another point pay attention to how your, why actually sustains you. How, when you connect to a sense of purpose or direction or that knowing of that, does it sustain you through difficult times? Does it sustain you through the challenging ups and downs in work? How does it really support you? And you can go back to your timeline and say, even though that was a difficult time in my work, my why was still really going.

Another point is, are you getting signs that you're off track or going in the wrong direction? And you'll notice this because you won't have a sense of your why or the one that you think you have isn't matching anything. But are you getting a sense of that?

So these are just little reflection points that I thought I'd add into the end of this episode.

And so to finalise, I want to give you one question that you can take away and contemplate.

Why are you doing the work you do? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Now when you've answered that six times for me, I think that you've done a lot of work for today.

There is so much in this episode, it could be a whole entire workshop. It could be a whole entire course. It could be a whole year of exploration. This is really important. So that's why I'm doing it. And I really love doing this for you. So I hope it helps you. I hope you come out of today, getting some sense of your, why getting even just a tiny, inkling, more motivation and connecting to at least your joy factor in your work. Or imagine if that's possible again.

I hope that you enjoyed that first episode of the series about changing the work you do. And if you're already feeling like, wow, this is exciting. I'm ready. Then that's what I do for support with people. So if you want to find out more information about the mentoring services that I offer to help people go through career transition through changing of their work or reconnecting to their why, then just go to my website and have a look at the different types of sessions that are on offer. And if



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anything, doesn't suit you in that list of what's on offer, then by all means you can always contact me and say, Jenn, I don't know what I really need from you, but I want your help. And here I am. And we'll work something out because that's the kind of person I am. So I wish you well. And I do encourage you to have some fun with this. Don't make it too serious. And if you encounter some bumps and things along the way, then take a break and get back to it when you feel right. Thanks.

Closing

Thank you for listening to another episode of Remembering to Be Me. Any information in show notes from this episode will be on my website www.jennshallvey.com. And after listening to this episode, if you think of someone else who might benefit, please share, the more the merrier. Until next time remember to say to yourself "Be me, and when I forget, remember to be me."