



Episode 013: Evolving your leadership through a writing practice

[00:00:00] **Alyssa:** There's so many benefits if you start to dig into science around sort of metacognitive benefits of thinking about what we think about. For some people sitting down to write helps them figure out what they actually think about a topic. Yes, you'll go into a situation and think, oh, I know. Start to finish what I'm gonna say, what's important here?

[00:00:21] And then you can quickly see where your argument starts to fall apart when you can't substantiate it as you try to write.

[00:00:29] **Carolyn:** Alyssa Burkus is a thought leadership strategist, writer, and coach. She's the founder of Shift Wisdom, a writing agency based near Toronto, Canada, where she specializes in helping business owners and corporate leaders build their authority and influence through writing her writing program.

[00:00:47] Get the words out, helps people who want more writing in their life, learn to break through writer's block, and build the routines that set them on the path to being prolific. Alyssa is also a three time cancer survivor and mom to two teenage boys.

[00:01:08] Alyssa and I have known each other for well over six years, and I wanted to bring her onto the show because she played a fundamental role in the writing of my book. Evolve would not be what it is today without her Contribu. In our conversation, you're going to hear about that journey. We'll talk a little bit about how I brought her in to help me finish the book a little bit about our experience embarking on this topic together and, and really what we learned out of it.

[00:01:44] And then we're gonna talk more about how writing is a really, really useful tool for leaders. I hope you enjoy the conversation, and here we go.



[00:01:58] **Intro:** Welcome to Evolve a new era of leadership, a podcast for real leaders to join real conversations with business experts, practitioners thought leaders, and change makers who integrate head, heart, and body in all they do, who commit to compassion and curiosity, who commit to radical self-leadership in their quest to understand others better too.

[00:02:23] Because the only way to deliver real results is to understand what it takes to lead real human beings. This is a new era of

[00:02:32] **Alyssa:** leadership.

[00:02:38] **Carolyn:** I'm Carolyn Sora, and this is Evolve a new era of leadership. Hello Evolv listeners. We've got another podcast for you this week, and today is. A very, very special guest. I mean, all the guests I have on are special, but Alyssa Burkis is an extra special guest and you're gonna find out why. Alyssa, welcome to the show.

[00:03:02] Hi. It's great to be here now, Alyssa's really just a few kilometers away, but we are doing this virtually, so we're both coming to you from just outside of Toronto, and you might be wondering why Alyssa's an extra special guest for me. The reason why she's an extra special guest and why I have her on just before the book launch is.

[00:03:24] Alyssa basically helped me pull myself back together from the thousand pieces that I fell apart into while writing this book literally and figuratively. So I wanted to bring Alyssa onto the show, one to share that experience about what it was like to help me sort of pull things back together and make this book what it is, cuz it would not have been anywhere remotely near to what it is without your help in assembling a few things.

[00:03:52] And, and then we're gonna talk a little bit afterwards just about the power of writing and how it can help leaders. So yeah, I've just kind of opened up and said a lot of things there. Where do you wanna hop in? Well,

[00:04:03] **Alyssa:** why don't we start at the beginning. Why don't we talk a little bit about how we came to work together?



[00:04:10] **Carolyn:** How I cried and cried on that walk in June. I

[00:04:13] **Alyssa:** wasn't gonna go there, but yeah, I mean that, it was interesting. So sometimes, For people who don't know me, I, I am a writer and I'm also writing coach, and usually I'm, I'm involved in a project at the beginning of a project, and this time with you, it felt like I was coming in after the opening credits of the movie.

[00:04:37] The first, you know, 15 minutes had started and I was stepping into some existing work, which was a little different for me. What was interesting, right. Had no, for

[00:04:48] **Carolyn:** both of us. Yeah. Listen, and I were friends outside of this, you know, partnership, this writing partnership, and we just, we had gone on a walk and I had, you know, been working on this for about a year and was just at a real point.

[00:05:01] And I remember going home from that walk thinking I. Oh my gosh, why did I figure this out earlier? So as you said, the opening credits had started. I'd put together a lot of stuff, but it didn't have the structure that I knew it needed. And that's where you so beautifully stepped in, and I know it was new to come in at that point in the process for you.

[00:05:22] **Alyssa:** Correct. Yeah, sometimes I'm involved at the end of the writing phase where people will ask me to help with editing. Sometimes there's a bit of structure thinking and work at that stage, but I'm involved either at the very beginning or beginning ish. Often the, the author has been thinking and noodling and maybe sort of sketching some outlines for a while.

[00:05:46] But earlier on in the project or after the initial draft is done, we will work together to clean it up, maybe move some things around, put some polish on and that sort of thing. Or I'm the writer doing, you know, the full writing of whatever that looks like. And so in this case, I needed to understand you had written.



[00:06:09] A fair bit. That was actually almost a completely different book initially. Oh yeah. And then you had taken that writing and started to rework it into the early stages of this book. And I guess my recollection was you got a little stuck, majorly stuck. Yeah, because you had all these great ideas. It was a, a meaty topic, right?

[00:06:34] Yep. And you wanted to bring people through the topic in a way that would feel approachable. And allow them to your reader to sort of step into the work with you and actually be able to action some of it, right? Because people hear trauma and they think this massive, heavy, difficult thing, and you wanted to make.

[00:07:00] That topic more accessible to people so that they could start to look at that differently in their own work. Yeah. And so you had a big mandate and lots of content and experience and wanting to work with somebody to bring that to life in a way that resonated in what you had in your head.

[00:07:24] **Carolyn:** It was a big topic.

[00:07:25] Least that's my recollection. Yeah. Yeah. No, I mean, I'm on the same page. It was a busy summer last summer for you and I. Mm-hmm. It's a big topic. Mm-hmm. And it wasn't gonna be just anybody that I thought could do that, that that was probably why I was carrying a lot of that burden too, thinking who can see this the way that I see it?

[00:07:43] Because I knew where I wanted it to go. I didn't necessarily, Know how to articulate that. And you did such a beautiful job of taking all of these different thoughts that I had and sort of the jumble of puzzle pieces. Mm-hmm. And put the outside border, like you just put it together and structured it in a way.

[00:08:02] I'm curious what gave you the belief that that topic was something that you and I could approach together? Mm-hmm. Cause that was a big topic. Yeah.



[00:08:15] **Alyssa:** Yeah. I think from the starting point perspective. Frankly, initially, and you know this, I wasn't sure right, it was big and heavy topic. I don't have a trauma-informed background.

[00:08:29] And so initially I remember thinking, yeah, I'm not sure, right? But I didn't say that to you cuz I wanted to process it. So my background is in leadership and organizational change before I came into writing. And as we had the conversation and I underst. The content that you wanted to bring to life, the pieces that you were looking to knit together, it struck me that first of all, your depth of knowledge on the topic and the work that you had done, it was there.

[00:09:03] So I. I could see where you wanted to go with it, and it just felt, and still feels really important. I think people don't understand this topic enough. They struggle with it. It manifests in so many different ways in the workforce. And so if this could be a book that would help people, I just became really excited about the idea of involved in the project and sounds a bit corny, but I, I sort of trusted that we would figure it out.

[00:09:33] You're good at what you do. I knew that we could put a process in place that would allow us to move through the content and get through the other side, and I think at a certain point we just. Both sort of said, okay, let's start and see what

[00:09:46] **Carolyn:** happens. Yep, absolutely. I did trust that. And there were certain areas where you carried me through and there are certain areas where I carried you through or just, I shouldn't say carried each other, but like we went through like alternating levels of, of sort of confidence in the process.

[00:10:00] Yeah. And you know, as we went through this and built this together, We really practiced what we were talking about in the book as well. Yeah. Which I think was really remarkable. Is there anything you wanna like highlight on that? Like what stood

[00:10:14] **Alyssa:** out for you? Well, as you were saying, the ups and downs, I was thinking, yeah, we were self-regulating, co-regulating as we went through that.



[00:10:21] I wouldn't have called it that initially. But we definitely could see that playing out as we were writing about it. We both went through phases. I mean, different things happening in our lives and any number of other variables in a creative endeavor. You go through the whole rollercoaster of doubt of I don't know what I'm doing.

[00:10:45] I know I went through that. I don't know how much a shared maybe at times, but. I also needed to do my job through this and figure some of my own thinking out in order to be able to get my work done. So I think in reading about some of the deeply personal stories that you share in the book, It also brought up for me a number of traumatic things that I've gone through, and so I found myself moving in between editor mode or in places where I was adding some writing.

[00:11:21] Also thinking about my own trauma, so almost being as a reader and then as a processor and thinking about how I would apply it in my own life or start to use it to. Think differently about certain situations. So I was learning content, you know, working with you, bringing my work into it and my experience.

[00:11:44] So it was a really unique experience from that perspective and a really unique project. Yeah, which was great.

[00:11:51] **Carolyn:** There were several times along the way where, I was able to lean into conversations with you that in the past would've scared the heck enemy. So really modeling vulnerability and, but again, that trust and that faith that, that we had in each other that your od organizational development and behavior change background was really important for me because we both know this topic.

[00:12:14] We didn't wanna be light about it, we didn't wanna be flippant about it. We wanted to be kind. But real, yeah. You really, you were able to bring both lenses to that being like personal and also like organizationally as well. Yeah.

[00:12:31] **Alyssa:** Yeah. It's unique. I, I mean, I don't think it's true in every writing partnership situation, sometimes.



[00:12:39] Clearly the author is the only domain expert. The writer is just the translator, really, and I loved that we started considering or talking about our working relationship as sort of a thinking partnership because it allowed us to. Dig even further, I think, into the content. Really Test it out loud. Yep.

[00:13:00] You had said to me at different points, you were able to sort of talk things out loud and work through things, I think, in a different way than perhaps a different kind of writer. Yep. Which in some cases, Other forms of writing partnerships are exactly what you need, right? Strictly a translator. This content's locked, you can go down that path.

[00:13:21] So I'm not trying to say one is better than the other, but I think that for people who are looking to choose somebody to work with in a writing partnership of any form, understanding what you're needing out of that partner. And whether that domain knowledge is important is a consideration. I think that not everybody is aware.

[00:13:44] They can even, even consider right, that a, that there is that additional element to bring into the work. Yeah.

[00:13:54] **Carolyn:** Now the output obviously is evolve, evolves being released in a short week. Exciting. Yeah. April 25th. I know I've joked, I've called you my book Doula. Um, helping birthdays, things, but yeah, it could not have come together in this beautiful way cuz that walk that we were on where I broke down and cried.

[00:14:16] I knew what it could be, and I just didn't know how to find myself to or how to find my way there. And so what I've learned through this is, for me, writing is a team sport. Mm-hmm. Which I should know because. I didn't play a lot of like single sports. It was, for me, it was always a team. And so that was a big eyeopener for me and also how therapeutic writing was.

[00:14:38] Mm-hmm. So I wanna circle back to, you know, remember I said earlier how we really practiced what we were talking about and so this notion of writing, how does that help leaders?



[00:14:52] **Alyssa:** It's interesting. So in my writing business, I started. Everything was writing for you, and I really thought that all of my work would be being the voice for leaders.

[00:15:05] It's my background in, in corporate change, all that sort of thing. But what I've realized is even if a leader has someone who does that writing for them, right? Share, you know, the emails that come out from the team or from the boss or whatever. You're missing or the more certainly that AI starts to play into it, right?

[00:15:29] In terms of taking some of those writing steps for people. The piece of thinking while writing gets missed. As a result, there's so many benefits if you start to dig into science around sort of metacognitive benefits of thinking about what we think about for some people sitting down to write. Helps them figure out what they actually think about a topic.

[00:15:54] Yes. You'll go into a situation and think, oh, I know. Start to finish what I'm gonna say, what's important here? And then you can quickly see where your argument starts to fall apart when you can't substantiate it as you try to write it out. So right, you're sort of thinking as you write. There's all kinds of research around connections with logic, with unlocking trauma, which is some of the connections that we talk about.

[00:16:19] And it was important to you to have practices Yeah. Towards the end of the book that would help people understand what you meant by self-regulation in particular and, and even. Uh, co-regulation or some of the self-awareness pieces, writing can kind of play out in a number of those different ways. Yep.

[00:16:36] There's data on the connection with writing, or expressive writing and trauma. Any number of benefits to the leader. From a personal or individual perspective, whether or not you ever published that writing to your team internally in your organization, maybe you don't for a period of time. Maybe it's strictly just something for you that allows you to analyze your thinking and figure out what you want to do next.



[00:17:05] Say next can be really,

[00:17:07] **Carolyn:** really helpful. And this was like a huge eye-opener for me is just how much writing could unlock stuff that was going on in my head. Yeah. And the first version of this book, and I talk a little bit about it, I can't remember if it was the, I think it was at the beginning and the end.

[00:17:26] This book in its first form was. Very different book. It was a memoir and it was a letter to my sons, and it was called The Perfect Widow, so it was very memoir esque. Mm-hmm. And I couldn't believe the things that were coming out of me as I was writing. Now, to be fair, I ordered a lot of it, or voice memoed a lot of it, and then printed it out and edited it from there.

[00:17:52] But it was the act of getting things out and until I could see it on paper and then write more about it. It just helped me process on such a different level. It was quite astounding. And, and for some of you out there might, you might be like me or it's like, well I'm not gonna journal, I'm not gonna write cuz what if I don't write this the right thing?

[00:18:12] And what if it's not in the right order, you know? Just that free flow, expressive writing just helped me sort of loosen that old belief pattern. Yeah,

[00:18:23] **Alyssa:** it's interesting, isn't it? How that can play out. I wanna clarify, when I talk about writing for yourself, there is certainly journaling as one practice for what writing can look like.

[00:18:35] There's a million journaling prompts that you can find online. Some of. Questions relate to what you're thinking and feeling in a particular moment or moments that that's passed. You can also do writing. That is work related or more immediate. If you imagine writing for yourself something that could look like a blog post, maybe you never publish it, but you're helping think through what you actually think about a topic.

[00:19:04] And I'll give you an example. I was listening to a podcast recently where they were talking about discipline is a choice, and I was really frustrated



because I have chronic illness issues in my mind, discipl. Isn't always a choice, that that's actually privileged perspective, ableist perspective around discipline.

[00:19:24] And so I was all worked up and ready to fire off a voice memo to the podcast host and I decided to write about it. And I wrote the conclusion first cuz I was so sure that I knew what I thought about the situation. But as I actually unpacked the topic for myself, I realized it's much more nuanced than that.

[00:19:43] There are things we can choose to be disciplined about that aren't necessarily in the US culture definition of discipline, but are actually rhythms and routines that we can put in place. So it's a long answer to say, and I haven't published that anywhere. Yeah. Yet. I may at some point, but it helped me.

[00:20:02] Think differently about a situation that I was already to fire off and, and get worked up about, but actually created to use what you talk about in the book, right? Self-regulation. It was a com. It ended up being a calming exercise, right? It opened new thinking and allowed me. To not engage many multiple people in an angry discussion because I actually realized my initial reaction wasn't necessarily fair.

[00:20:34] **Carolyn:** Oh, and there's so much there, right? Like when we think of the model, and again, you were so instrumental in helping build that evolve model. Like when I shared the ideas and you came back with the two by two, I was like, oh, damn. Yeah, that's what it looks like. You know, reactivity is core and fundamental for leaders, anybody in society, right?

[00:20:53] When you just look at the vitriol and just the divisiveness. A lot of it is built on our impulse, our reactivity pattern. And so yeah, what I'm hearing you say, and what I've learned as well, is that writing can be a way to help us understand ourself, our thinking. Mm-hmm. And give us a bit of space to process so that we can respond with intention and purpose versus reacting with fear and anger and hey, it's still fine to honor those emotions.

[00:21:26] Let's process them first. Yeah. And if we want to release that, then at least we're being mindful of releasing the anger and the fear versus that flippant



[00:21:34] **Alyssa:** reaction. Yeah. Yeah, there's been so many leaders I've worked with in past work lives who would blow up in a meeting and then later come back to the team and say, Hey, you know, I think I overreacted there or apologize, uh, you know, I was fired up.

[00:21:52] Yeah. Let's, you know, begin to process. And how great would, and you know, if you think about that model of the erratic right, and that environment that it creates where people. Are on edge worrying about what's gonna happen next? Do I have to be ready for any number of responses? I know I've been in those situations of constant eggshells, and the stress that gets ratcheted up is really, really difficult for a team.

[00:22:18] So if you have a mechanism that allows you to process those emotion, I mean, it's not, it's not gonna eliminate it completely, right? We have situations right where we react. But it starts to bring awareness to it that even in that moment you can pause and say, I need to reflect on this for a little bit, or maybe reflect isn't the word you use.

[00:22:39] I need to think more about this before we can start to move into thinking about what the solutions are. Give me 24 hours to sit with this. Yeah, and then know you're going to use that writing practice. It might be as simple as pros and cons list right off the side of your desk or something, but knowing you have a routine or a practice or a ritual, that helps.

[00:23:00] Deescalate the emotions to allow you to really think differently about the topic. Can be, yep. Hugely helpful for you and your team.

[00:23:08] **Carolyn:** One of the key themes in the book is this notion of integration and integrating our head, our heart, and our body. So we call them the centers of intelligence, and we need to have practices that allow us to do.

[00:23:23] Because there's so much that goes on in our system that we don't have cognitive control over. And so again, you know, for me, who has resisted writing for so long, I mean, the fact that I've actually published two books kind of makes me giggle. I'm sure my high school English teacher would just. Laugh out loud cuz I was not an a good English student.



[00:23:43] We have to give ourselves space to be able to integrate these three aspects of ourselves. And so one of the main reasons we wanted to talk today too is to really emphasize that writing is a phenomenal tool for leaders to self-regulate, to deepen self-awareness. And so, What kind of practices would you suggest, because obviously not everyone's gonna go write a book and have it published, but what are some things that you work on with your clients that help them integrate this as a practice?

[00:24:16] Yeah.

[00:24:17] **Alyssa:** There's probably two kinds of writing that come to mind. There's the writing that you are publishing externally to build authority for your organization or your career, and that's a little bit different. I mean, there's writing practices that we do there. What I do in my course, like it's the process really.

[00:24:35] It's the habit, right? Of writing consistently. Daily getting some notes on paper for a leader who's looking to use writing for their own thinking process, it's a little bit similar in that setting aside five or 10 minutes to write each day, whether it's beginning of the day or the end of the day, capturing your thoughts in the moment can be a tool that helps you land on what some of.

[00:25:06] Deeper priorities, I guess are, or the moments to reflect on, or the things that you wanna really emphasize with your team.

[00:25:14] **Carolyn:** Get through the noise type thing. Like to realize what the important stuff is. Okay.

[00:25:18] **Alyssa:** The example I always use with people is, So many times as leaders, we get to the end of the year and we've got those year end performance reviews, which I know is a whole topic.

[00:25:28] A topic I shouldn't bring up with you, but for many leaders is a reality. Once a year we have to sit down and write the reviews, and more often than not, they're based on the last month or six weeks of working with the person. You can maybe think of some random highlights through the year. More



often than not, it's kind of fuzzy up until October, and then some things start to come into focus, and the same is true week to week.

[00:25:51] But if you can create a process of capturing some notes through the week and then sharing those back out with your team. You are benefiting from the thinking process you do yourself through the week, but then there's a co-regulation element that kicks into gear where your team is hearing from you about topics that are important that they want to hear from you on.

[00:26:13] Their anxiety goes up and they fill in the blanks if there's gaps, right? If they don't hear on a topic, they're gonna draw their own conclusions. Sometimes those conclusions are. Extreme or dire. Yeah. And so you're helping co-regulate within your team to share out your thoughts. And that isn't just a sunshine and roses yay team.

[00:26:34] Here's all the good things you do it. Ken, I, I worked with a leader years ago who would. Every Friday, send an email to his team with some notes about observations from the week, maybe a big meeting he was in, that he was sharing some thoughts from what was discussed in that room that they wouldn't have access to, but also observations if there was an issue that happened in a project sharing.

[00:26:59] You know, he knows about it. He knows these things had happened. And he hopes these additional things are being put into place to make sure that doesn't happen. Again, everybody, it's not an easy topic to hear about, but everybody kind of goes, okay, that's what we need to do and everybody can kind of get back to work.

[00:27:17] Can be a really great process to get into a regular habit and routine to get into with your team.

[00:27:23] **Carolyn:** You know what, what comes up for me when you say that? It brings me back to like 20 years ago, very different in our workplaces than. But I remember this sort of practice of sharing with your team what happened at the leadership team meeting that you were at.



[00:27:40] It became, to be honest, like a checkbox, like, oh, I must report on this. Like it became mechanical and what I'm hearing, yeah. You say though, with this writing practice is it's not, let me just. Barf out the facts that I saw this week, or you know, we had a meeting here. It's really sharing with your team some of the things that you're processing, some of the things that are top of mind for you, and the ability to pause and reflect and think is such an underutilized.

[00:28:11] Skill. We aren't making spaces in our day for it because we are really hooked into that productivity myth, chapter seven, by the way, in the upcoming book. Mm-hmm. And so hearing those examples of business leaders who use writing as a tool to create that consistency and safety with their teams, I think there's so much space for that.

[00:28:30] So much opportunity for that.

[00:28:33] **Alyssa:** Yeah, I agree. You know, your mention of part of your writing process was using Otter, I think is great. Showing people that. There are tools that if you don't feel like a natural writer, you sit down to an email, it feels like a blank page, and you get overwhelmed. If you can use a tool like Voice Memo or Otter, where you are saying some of the things that come to mind, or maybe it's.

[00:28:58] Siri, add this to my notes, and you collect them later. There's tools that can help streamline that process for you, even if that doesn't initially feel natural. Yeah, and like your example about the checklist or check boxes, right, is probably because. It doesn't come naturally to those individuals, and so they're relying on a template.

[00:29:19] Mm. You could maybe use a template that says, I'm gonna share these three kinds of things each week, but the more you can share in the moment things that are timely and that are important to you, the more that will come through. I believe with the. So what

[00:29:36] **Carolyn:** advice would you share with anybody listening now about how to use a writing process or how to use writing to navigate through change?



[00:29:49] Because we know change is not ever gonna stop.

[00:29:52] **Alyssa:** The conversations I have with people or and with their clients is often, it just feels like the level of uncertainty has ratcheted up more in the last year. You know, the example I always think of is the whiplash of. One month we're talking about their great resignation where everybody's thinking about leaving and then weeks later, massive tech layoffs, right?

[00:30:16] And, and so it just feels like things are still uneven. I don't know whether it's still fears about covid and that sort of thing. Writing can become that steady anchor through whatever uncertainty your team is facing. If they know you're gonna communicate with them every Friday, they come to look forward to that, it's gonna get them.

[00:30:36] Or maybe it's daily. Maybe there's a quick email you send out daily during times of particular. Difficult change. Mm. And I appreciate that writing's difficult for people. When I talk about sending something to your team, I'm not talking about 2000 polished words every week with beautiful punctuation and hyperlinks to 50 key articles you've been reading.

[00:30:59] It can be short and sweet, it can be bullet points, whatever style feels consistent with you, but something that becomes regular and that isn't created by. The team comms person or other people in the change programs who are available to do that writing that writing is important and they can do their part of it, but writing can become that anchor for a team of really kind of grounding into, we know there's 50 priorities.

[00:31:29] Here's the three that are really going to help us get through these next two weeks. Hit reply. Let me know, like whatever dynamic kinda

[00:31:37] **Carolyn:** works for. I could write an email to the amazing team that has helped me bring this book into the world and just share a few thoughts. Like I could do that right away.

[00:31:49] Yeah,



[00:31:50] **Alyssa:** yeah, absolutely. I've seen some leaders who will drop an article in there, you know, almost like a newsletter, right? If you think about, not with the pressure of a newsletter with fancy visuals and all that stuff, but if there's something great you've. Include that with a hyperlink. If it's something you want your team to be reading, they wanna get in your head, even if you feel like you sit side by side with them, which I appreciate in more and more.

[00:32:14] Hybrid space is a, is a virtual side by side. Yeah. They wanna know what's in your head, what are you seeing, what can you expose them to that helps them think differently about their work. Yeah. How can you reassure them? How can you show them there's things you're doing that might be invisible to them, that are helping move the team forward?

[00:32:32] Yeah. How can you explain something. Seems like it doesn't make sense, and they're trying to wrap their head around how they're getting this message over here. They're hearing this from their clients. How do you put those things together? Those are all things that you can share in a written form that feels different than a live talking in a team meeting.

[00:32:54] I don't know. There's something about writing maybe I'm, I'm, I appreciate, I'm a little biased about the power of writing a small bias there. Yep. But it also. In some cases is new, medium, right? To sort of change it up, show your team. This was important enough for me to take the time to put in writing. I'm not just.

[00:33:14] Sort of talking off the top of my head at a team meeting, right? This, well, I took the time to share this with you

[00:33:20] **Carolyn:** as somebody who likes to talk off the top of my head and just show up. And again, that was a great balance between the two of you, the two of us when we were mm-hmm. Partnering on this project.

[00:33:30] It does stop. It does stop me and. Allow me to be more intentional and mindful, and I'd say probably a little bit less flippant with some of the comments that I might make. Mm-hmm. And again, I'll come back to



integration. Yes. I don't consider myself somebody who goes to writing first, but for me to have that integration between all three centers.

[00:33:54] Mm. I need to create a little bit of space to allow that processing. So it's a really, really useful tool. And I would really encourage, you know, any of those people who are listening, leader, formalized or not. How can you use writing to help deepen your self-awareness? And that in turn, lead to.

[00:34:16] Self-regulation and co-regulation and why we keep talking about those three things. So they're the three principles of the evolved leadership model. Any last pieces of advice out there when it comes to writing and being an evolved leader that you wanna share?

[00:34:35] **Alyssa:** So on the writing front, people can get really stuck in their heads that there's only one right way.

[00:34:43] I don't know if it came from. English teachers in sixth grade or Oh my gosh,

[00:34:49] **Carolyn:** I can't believe you said sixth grade cuz my was like Miss Tracy and we were convinced she was making up words on our spelling test, but that's so funny. You said,

[00:34:57] **Alyssa:** oh, I'm sorry to you. Brought me back to a moment. Terrible moment.

[00:35:01] Yeah. Was it bad? Well, I mean, to see your reaction, I hear that all the time. People freeze at the idea of sharing things in writing and so I would just invite you to. Play around with it a little bit, see what comes up for you. Try a little bit of writing on your own. Imagine sending an email to your team if you don't send any ever sending one this week and just a couple of.

[00:35:26] Observations and see what happens. See if you get a reaction, even if you don't hear anything back. See how it felt for yourself. Are you more collected in your thoughts? Do you feel clearer about the direction you're



setting? What's showing up? And sort of invite observation in terms of the evolved side.

[00:35:47] I guess experimenting a little bit and uh, also maybe a little more observing right around. Would I benefit from better self-regulation practices? Where do I find things getting out of control? Are there particular situations? Often it's also particular individuals that kind of change our mode or dynamic and.

[00:36:12] Trying to catch yourself in the moment when you're with somebody to find a practice that helps you stay more regulated in those situations so that you can be that. Person helping keep the other person in the conversation. And by the way, this is true in life as well as work, right? So if I think about, if you're a parent, if you're helping an aging parent, if any number of other life dynamics, the same principles around co-regulation, self-regulation apply, right?

[00:36:44] So. Just kind of catching yourself in the moment and doing a little observing. Yeah. Maybe playing with a few of the practices that, you know, you talk about in the book and see how you feel. I know for myself, it helped me work through some difficult, uh, situations that I didn't realize I hadn't fully processed for myself.

[00:37:05] And I think together, you and I did some of that too, that, yeah. I mean, not to sound too corny about this book, but I really. I believe in it and the work, if you test around or play with it, you can really see some interesting things unfold.

[00:37:19] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Well, and as you were sharing that, two things came to mind, I think back to a certain.

[00:37:26] Time in my career where I was really, really in a frustrating place. I was really frustrated. I felt really lost, and I had totally forgotten about it until now. I came home and I started typing out observations from the day. Hmm. And just with like holy expletives, I don't know what else to do. I'm actually gonna write some of these things down.



[00:37:56] It helped me process through some difficult moments, and my whole thought was, okay, if I just write down these observations, I can see the things that I don't want to carry on and move forward with. The other thing that it just reminded me is when I think on a personal front, when I've gone through some really, really tough times, I've journaled and so smattered throughout our house, or I would say at least.

[00:38:21] 12 different journals where I've started to help me process and get through like the low, low lows. And then I stop once I kind of come out of it. And so I used to beat myself up about that and say like, oh, I should keep doing it. I need to have a journal process every day and da, da, da. And now I'm like, no, I, I will just write when I feel like writing.

[00:38:39] But it really did help me navigate through some really hard, hard change points in my life.

[00:38:45] **Alyssa:** Yeah, I believe. I also know for myself, there have been some real lows that I couldn't even write about. Hmm. And that was telling too, I've had a longstanding journaling habit myself from childhood, and there are distinct points in time that are big gaps that I just was not able to write about.

[00:39:05] And that. At the time spoke volumes to me too. Hmm. So the way that I move between journaling and a writing habit is I just have a few minutes each morning. Some mornings it's more of a journaling vibe to the start where I'm writing about personal things that. In no shape or form we're ever gonna see the light of day.

[00:39:25] Mm-hmm. And then there's other times where I'm taking more of a work related approach to thinking through a situation or something that I wanna communicate out and writing more with that hat on. And so I find I just. Keep the space. It's 10 minutes in the morning. Sometimes it runs longer if I'm on a roll.

[00:39:43] Yep. Sometimes it's like a sentence that is all I can get out and that's fine too, but it's just this space where I can move in between, yeah. These different modes depending on what I need. Yeah.



[00:39:54] **Carolyn:** Well, You know, we could talk for hours. Well, I could anyway. You probably used less words than I do. You're more efficient with your word selection, so Not at all.

[00:40:04] So thank you, thank you, thank you. I mean, thank you. Doesn't even seem like a big enough word, uh, for all of your contributions to make evolve what it is and what I hope it can be. And yeah, it is been a real pleasure to have you by my side through that process. So

[00:40:21] **Alyssa:** thank you. Thank you. And thank you.

[00:40:24] Bringing me along for that ride. I really enjoyed it. It was important to me to be involved in that work, so

[00:40:29] **Carolyn:** thank you. Now, if any of our listeners want to reach out to you and see some of your work, maybe sign up for some of the, the programs that you offer. Where could they find

[00:40:39] **Alyssa:** you? Yeah, so the easiest place is my website, shift wisdom.com.

[00:40:44] You can also find me on Instagram in that same handle, and I happen to be the only Alyssa Burkas on LinkedIn, so Cool. You can find it there too.

[00:40:54] **Carolyn:** Uh, and we'll have all of those links in the show notes as well. Now to end off every podcast, I ask three questions. And you're familiar with these three princip already.

[00:41:03] See you've seen them before. So the first question is about self-awareness and sharing a moment that perhaps was quite uncomfortable, yet full of insight about yourself.

[00:41:16] **Alyssa:** So this goes back a ways I've learned over the years that in the moment I don't react emotionally, particularly in high emotional situations.



[00:41:27] So whether it's joy or sadness, people equate it to calm, but it's actually, I just have learned that I kind of shut down. Mm. So one of those times was my wedding day. Oh no. Where I was smiling, but not. The emotions that my partner had hoped to evoke in his speech. And so it was 10 days later when I was by myself on an airplane that I finally cried the tears that people expected to see.

[00:41:56] Oh wow. At my wedding. That's a pattern that's continued. It served me well at times. There's situations and coaching, you know, difficult things. People come up. I'm able to sort of stay calm for them, but yeah. Yeah. Wow. I've learned, I've just learned that about myself. There's a delayed emotional reaction.

[00:42:14] Yeah. Sometimes at inopportune

[00:42:15] **Carolyn:** times. Yeah. Well, and hey, nothing wrong with that. That's just the way Yeah. It rolls for you. Yeah. There's times

[00:42:20] **Alyssa:** where I would like to participate in the emotions of the room and I try, but um,

[00:42:25] **Carolyn:** yeah. I guess I could say I'm kind of the opposite. Maybe 10 days later, the logic sits in for me, head type,

[00:42:32] **Alyssa:** part-time.

[00:42:34] **Carolyn:** That's funny. All right, so second one. What is a practice or ritual not writing, because I know we've talked about that. It's pretty much, you know, all of the podcast is answering the second question, but what's a, another practice or ritual that helps regulate you or calm you?

[00:42:49] **Alyssa:** Yeah. For me, it's walking outside ideally in nature if possible.

[00:42:55] It just has an immediate calming effect, and it's also where some of my best ideas come in. Mm. Good old forest bath. Absolutely. Absolutely.



[00:43:06] **Carolyn:** All right. Now last but not least. What is a song or genre of music that makes you feel part of something bigger than?

[00:43:15] **Alyssa:** I love this question. Probably a hundred songs come to mind.

[00:43:19] The one I kept coming back to was A Million Dreams In The Greatest Showman, uh, soundtrack. There's something as the voices lift. Oh, it's just

[00:43:28] **Carolyn:** great. There's two versions of that song, right? One's by pink and one is by

[00:43:32] **Alyssa:** another. Not the pink one. The other artist, the collection of artists from the, from the movie.

[00:43:38] Yep.

[00:43:38] **Carolyn:** Mm-hmm. Yep. Um, cuz yeah, different voices and tones can elicit different, so I wanna make sure I, I need the right one. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Our time on this podcast is wrapping up, but the time for Evolve, the book is just beginning, so, okay. Yeah. Thank you again, Alyssa, for being on the podcast and, and helping bring in that book into the world and we'll see where it.

[00:44:01] Can't

[00:44:01] **Alyssa:** wait. Thanks.

[00:44:04] **Carolyn:** I'm thinking about the conversation that Alyssa and I just had, and in particular how to use writing as a tool to self-regulate to help navigate through change. And it's not something that comes naturally to me. I will say when I give myself the space to do it and I let go of the fear of not getting it perfect because I still do have that.



[00:44:34] Underlying sort of message going through me. What if I'm not writing it properly? What if I'm not using the right spelling or grammar or you know, those things that you heard us talk about, my grade six English teacher. But when I actually give myself space to just let some ideas come out, get them out of my head and undo a piece of paper, who knows who's gonna see it, but that process.

[00:45:01] Of writing really can give us space to integrate, to pull things together in our day, and it just makes sense of things. So whether you use a voice note tool, whether or not you write, really hope that this episode has inspired you to make space for one or the other, or maybe even both. Thanks so much for listening.

[00:45:30] And please take a minute to subscribe, rate, and review the show. I'd really appreciate it. And a friendly reminder. April 25th, evolve the path to trauma informed leadership will be available. See you soon.