



Episode 016: Tune into the wisdom of your body with Annika Koman

[00:00:00] **Anakha:** I remember Intel when we first started doing the mindfulness program. I had a leader come into maybe the second or third iteration of awaken intel that we were offering, and I was like, Hey, Joe, what has you coming here? And he's like, well, every single one of my team members has gone through the course, and when I walk into the room for our team meetings, it's like entering a force field.

[00:00:24] Like

[00:00:25] their

[00:00:25] **Anakha:** laptops are closed, their phones are a site, and they are so present that I feel like I have to up my game.

[00:00:33] **Carolyn:** Today's guest, Is Annika Koman. Annika has over 30 years of in-depth experience in corporate culture, organizational change, and leadership. She has worked with leading organizations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Intel, Nike, Microsoft, Eli Lilly, McCain Foods, and Zappos.

[00:01:02] Ann has a master's degree. In organizational psychology and leadership development, a master's degree in Divinity and a professional certificate in spirituality, health and medicine. She's also a certified mindfulness and embodiment practitioner, expressive arts therapist. An unpacked bias is now facilitator.

[00:01:25] She has so much to share with us as she's inspired innovation and evolution with individuals, teams, and leaders alike. When I met Anika a few months ago, her presence and calmness was. Captivating. And as she shared her



organizational background and her past experiences, I thought, wow, the calmness and the presence just didn't match with this corporate executive.

[00:02:03] And I think that says something. I think it's really an opportunity for us to. Reimagine what it means to be a corporate leader, that we can show up with calmness and presence and well, if I get a little sciencey, a regulated nervous system. There's a lot happening in our world right now. A lot. There's a lot of chaos and there's a lot of dysregulation in our nervous systems.

[00:02:35] This conversation with Annika will. Give you some insight about some practices, some rituals, and really the power of your body as a center of intelligence. I hope you enjoy it.

[00:02:51] **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.

[00:03:15] 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 leadership.

[00:03:30] **Carolyn:** I'm Carolyn Sora. And this is Evolve a new era of leadership. Hello, evolve listeners. I am really excited today to speak with our next guest, Annika Koman. There is so much wisdom, I think, Annika, that you have to share with us. I'm so excited to have you on the show. Thank you for joining us today. Hmm.

[00:03:54] Thank

[00:03:54] **Anakha:** you Carolyn. It's a pleasure. I'm curious about what we're gonna talk about and what, what wisdom will unfold.

[00:04:02] **Carolyn:** Yes. And you know what? That's one part, just letting things unfold. And I mean, you've got such a depth in your background and so much great experience as it comes to culture and leadership.



[00:04:14] And with this podcast, I'm really inspired by people like you who have that experience and are fi. 90 new ways, new leadership perspectives to bring into our workplaces because Lord knows there's a lot of change going on out there. Mm-hmm.

[00:04:34] **Anakha:** Definitely is. Yeah.

[00:04:36] **Carolyn:** And so Annika I, as I said, I know you've been doing this work for a long time.

[00:04:40] What would you say has been one of the biggest changes you've seen in the past 10 to 11 years when it comes to leadership? Hmm.

[00:04:51] **Anakha:** Wow. I think that the demands and the pressures are just getting more and more intense. Mm-hmm. Whether that be what we just came through as far as the cultural trauma of Covid and at least in the states, you know, racial violence, I mean, that's been going on, but the way that it landed in culture.

[00:05:14] So leaders are having to navigate. Those types of pressures, I think about the new AI technology and the uncertainty about how that's gonna impact the workforce. It's certainly creating a transformation and what we're transforming to some new technologies. It seems like leaders are having to really work on some of the muscles that maybe were always necessary, but now they're critical.

[00:05:41] And by that I mean like the ability, like you were saying, to self and co-regulate, the ability to include not just the mind, but the heart and the body and all these centers of intelligence like. It's kind of a new step up for everyone. Like we're not gonna be able to get by in how we've maybe been able to, I shouldn't say necessarily wing it, but Yeah.

[00:06:08] It's really more like we're gonna have to go to leadership gym on the daily.



[00:06:12] **Carolyn:** Yeah. I love when you say that leadership gym. Yeah. And the gym classes are changing a little bit, aren't they? Yes, they are. And, and I know you have a whole lot of certifications and work. In embodiment and somatic practices, which is, you know, kind of what I'm calling these new gym classes that we really need to open our eyes up to as leaders.

[00:06:33] Yeah, absolutely.

[00:06:35] **Anakha:** Yeah, absolutely. And you know, the interesting thing that I found with my journey, because I started out in leadership at Intel and also started my own internet company back in the mid nineties, and I was a driver. Pusher like innovator. But I also look at the impact that it had on me, my marriage, the people that I was managing and leading.

[00:07:05] Hmm. And it wasn't all positive. And so a lot of the work that I went and did as far as you know, degrees or certifications was first for me. To connect with my own trauma, my own programming, and really kind of heal that. And it also was to also serve and bring it to other people. So,

[00:07:31] **Carolyn:** yeah. And how long have you been doing that Annika, in terms of like bringing this work in a consultative perspective?

[00:07:38] **Anakha:** Yeah. Gosh. Probably like 25 years, 20 years, something like that. You know, it's interesting. My father was a executive vice president at Chevron. And I think it gave me a really unique insight into what goes on behind the scenes with leadership. So I've always been curious about that and also really not intimidated by often power that leadership wields and the ability to bring what I know will help.

[00:08:12] So yeah, it's been quite a long time that I've been kind of in the study with people around me, my father, myself.

[00:08:20] **Carolyn:** And so this whole moving into the embodiment work and the somatic work, was that something you saw your father do all those years ago, or was that just part of your journey and where it took you?



[00:08:31] **Anakha:** No, I saw more of the gap, the disconnect. Mm-hmm. In my dad. And I think I also led that way. I mean, I think a lot of leaders. But the thing that I saw with my dad is, you know, once he retired and started his retirement lifestyle of snow skiing every day, and but mountain bike riding that gap caught up to him.

[00:08:53] He ended up dying of a massive heart attack when he was only 64 years old. Oh, wow. And he used to say this thing to me. I would say, dad, how do you deal with. Whether it be the mental illness of my younger brother or the pressure at work, and he goes, well, whatever I can't deal with or control, I just put it in a box and put a bow on it and put it on the shelf.

[00:09:15] Well, I think there was one too many of those at a somatic emotional level. Yeah. That got put on the shelf. Yeah. So I didn't see my dad more integrated in that way, and I think it cost. Him ultimately and And those people that loved him too.

[00:09:34] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Well cuz I mean, it has to go somewhere, these feelings and emotions and Yes.

[00:09:39] Different research. Now we've got different insights and when we know better we can do better. Yeah. And you know, as we shared when we met the first time, we both have our own experiences and have realized the role that trauma, which is essentially an emotional wound, if we're just gonna be really high level, can impact us, and learning how to move through it to release it so it doesn't get pushed down.

[00:10:03] Mm-hmm. Is really a big part of this mixed era in leadership, isn't it? Mm-hmm.

[00:10:08] **Anakha:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. And I think that requires that we have practices that allow us to have more capacity to be with discomfort in the body and in the nervous system. And how do we get enough support around whatever we're needing to experience.



[00:10:27] And I think the thing that sometimes we don't remember that, you know, emotional intelligence isn't just about being able to be aware of, be present with. Regulate and strong or challenging emotions. It's also saying that when we tune into those emotions, that there's intelligence within the emotion that we're experiencing.

[00:10:49] Mm I I think about this one leader, McCain Foods recently was doing a diversity equity inclusion project with some indigenous communities and. She was saying to me, she's like, I don't know why I haven't sent this email for the next step in building a bridge between McCain and these groups. She said, I, I should just get it done.

[00:11:14] I should just get it done. And we slowed way down and it was like, well, let's tune into what the wisdom and what's stopping you. And as she did that, she started to unwind it and was like, I need to bring a whole lot more care in communication. It's not just an email and pass off. It's a hosting of this relationship building that I need to stay present with.

[00:11:38] She found a lot of intelligence and wisdom and patience and pace with a project that she was working on and, but it was interesting how quickly the mind came in Yeah. And was like shouting it's bad advice, which was just get it done. Yeah. So important, both for our own healing of our nervous system so we have more grounded leadership, but also the ability to say, wow, there's a reason that something's arising here.

[00:12:10] Let me listen into that because there's intelligence and guidance here

[00:12:15] **Carolyn:** and you use a word there that I love, and I think it's again, the next sort of level of leadership, which is attunement. Can you share a little bit with us about how you help people attune to themselves, to their emotions, to their bodies in your coaching work?

[00:12:33] **Anakha:** Yeah, I think the first piece is pause and slowing down. It's kind of impossible. Well, maybe as we build that muscle, we can move quickly and be attuned, but that's a higher advanced skill. So for people that haven't. Develop that capacity. It really is slowing down and pausing and starting to



become aware of something more than the tower of thought and thinking and moving down, descending down into like, what's happening in my chest?

[00:13:02] What's happening in my throat? What's happening in my belly? What. Feelings are there. And even starting to have a language of emotions. Like, you know, lot of times people will say, oh, I feel like, and say a thought that's not attunement to an emotion. So not just thinking our emotions, but actually being able to tune in, like, oh, there's sadness here, or there's worry or concern or anxiousness.

[00:13:27] So we slowly start to bring people kind of back into. Their present moment and then being able to develop that skill to kind of turn the antenna inward and be curious and to keep doing that. Because in the beginning it might like be I've got nothing. Yeah, I'm fine. Right.

[00:13:46] **Carolyn:** Yeah, I know. That's where I was when I started doing this work.

[00:13:49] I'm like, feelings, okay, I can throw it a few words at you, but I had no idea what was going on in my body and that whole part about slowing down. So I work with a somatic experience in. An SE practitioner, somatic experiencing, she can take me to a place. It only takes like five minutes and then there's a lot going on.

[00:14:08] Yes. And so I'm curious with your clients, cuz I know you work with like top executives. Mm-hmm. Does it take a while to help them find a little bit of that pause? Cause you know, I know you're not saying we're gonna pause for two hours and go cross our legs, and how are they able to gravitate towards that and make it a very realistic practice for them?

[00:14:29] **Anakha:** Yeah, sometimes I call it leadership fitness or in the diversity, equity and inclusion space. I call it d e i, emotional fitness. And we can't interrupt bias or patterns of behavior if we aren't able to pause and tune in and notice what's going on within me. My thoughts, emotions, like how might fear be driving me, how might shame be driving me?



[00:14:55] Mm-hmm. And then tune into around me. So I kind of. You know, position it as it really is, which is this is a critical capacity to be able to take yourself off of automatic pop pilot and pause as many times as you can throughout the day. More pauses, more leadership presence. Right. And then I take them right into a practice like we do an actual practice of pausing of.

[00:15:21] Inviting them to start to notice what's going on in their mental landscape, emotional landscape, somatic landscape, and that the more attuned that they are to themselves, more automatically attuned. They're gonna be to their teams, their customers, clients, all of that. Yeah. So we, we do the practice. I remember one of my colleagues or.

[00:15:44] Mentor says we perform at the level of our practice. So it's not something that we can pull out of a hat when we're in crisis or when the stakes are really high if we haven't been practicing it.

[00:15:56] **Carolyn:** Right, right. Can you take us through, just for those who are listening, who are like, what is this? What is it like?

[00:16:02] Can we just do like a little example? Could you take me through just an example of a practice

[00:16:07] **Anakha:** or how we pause? Yeah, yeah.

[00:16:09] **Carolyn:** Just something that maybe our listeners could try to pause for. Cause you know, when you think of those back to back meetings, you and I have both been there in previous worlds. How can we start to find these pauses in our day?

[00:16:20] If you could just walk me through something as a demonstration.

[00:16:23] **Anakha:** Right, right. So it would just stop by like a little bit, taking the focus on the external world, all the things that you're focusing on as far as tasks or the environment around, and almost like just turn your site inward. I'm gonna close my eyes here.



[00:16:40] Yeah, you can close your eyes, soften your gaze, whatever feels most comfortable, and all of these will be invitations. I think that's really important for people to find their own pathway to themselves and my invitation might not work for, for you. The invitation is just to start to notice the inner landscape of our experience, and that might happen by.

[00:17:07] Becoming aware of our bodies, like our feet on the ground, but in the seat we might drop our hands to our sides, letting our shoulders drop and letting the dropping of the shoulders kind of move. Some of that focus maybe up in the mind, down into the body,

[00:17:29] **Carolyn:** like really thinking about like, I'm visualizing.

[00:17:34] Looking inward out of my head. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

[00:17:39] **Anakha:** And then noticing and bringing some awareness to your breathing. And as you do that, it might start to change. You might go and constrict. That's okay. It might start to deepen, relax. Yeah. I feel it.

[00:17:58] **Carolyn:** Definitely slow down. Mm-hmm. A bit when I bring my attention there.

[00:18:04] **Anakha:** And you might just notice like what's speaking the loudest, what's got your attention as far as what's happening inside? Is it a series of streaming thoughts? Is it. Uh, sensation in the body. It could be a place that's tight or burning or, mm-hmm. Cool. I notice right now that there's like a place in between my shoulder blades that is a little bit burning.

[00:18:33] I'm thinking about the workout I did this morning. I'm like, oh, it's kind of pinched up there.

[00:18:39] **Carolyn:** Yeah, I'm feeling some tingling in my feet, which I'm learning about me is, is just part of my process to pause, uh, sort of like grounding and I also feel it in my hands as well. Just to slight tingle.



[00:18:55] **Anakha:** Mm-hmm. I might also check in with that emotional landscape.

[00:19:01] How are you feeling in this day and in this moment? What's the feeling tone or vibe?

[00:19:09] **Carolyn:** And when you say that, Anika, am I looking for the feeling or am I looking for an emotion to label that feeling?

[00:19:17] **Anakha:** It could be either. It could be a feeling that doesn't have a descriptor, or it might be, oh, today definitely there's been sadness, or Today I feel excitement.

[00:19:33] I feel pressure. Or it might be a whole mix of different things arising. Yeah. It's not so important to really know. Yeah.

[00:19:46] **Carolyn:** Can we just pull out, how do you wrap up this little pause that we mm-hmm. I'd

[00:19:51] **Anakha:** invite you to like open your eyes and then also take note of your external environment, like me on the screen.

[00:20:01] What's around you? Just looking behind you to the side. I'm just kind of orienting in this moment. Hmm. And often I'll have people also just get clear on what do they want to create next in, in this conversation in their day. We might call that intention. It might be a quality that you wanna bring into the meeting or into the next interaction you have with someone.

[00:20:32] Mm. Just letting that kind of be also a grounding that you can return to throughout the day if you wanna pause. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Really simple.

[00:20:45] **Carolyn:** It is really simple and it's so fulfilling. I know it took me a few times with some guided practice with my SE practitioner. And now I find I can take myself there.



[00:20:58] Yeah. A little bit better. I still need reminders. Mm-hmm. And I know Annika, you do this plus many other things in your leadership accelerator program and really helping people find the space in their nervous system and how to tune the body. Are there any other examples or stories that you could share with us about leaders who go through that program with you?

[00:21:27] Yeah.

[00:21:29] **Anakha:** You know, I'm thinking of another leader also from McCain, and he was telling me, and we do group coaching sessions around, DEI initiatives, diversity, equity inclusion initiatives that they're stewarding and their leadership

[00:21:46] and,

[00:21:47] **Anakha:** and we talk about the power of the small. Sometimes we think that leadership and movement has to be these huge things and sometimes there's like this.

[00:21:56] Seed change this like very, this pivot that can yield amazing impact and, and this is an example of one, he was noticing that when he was walking around the office that he would. Moved pretty quickly by people's desks and cubicles and wherever people were, you know, to where he needed to go and back to his office.

[00:22:19] And he was noticing like his own insecurity, his own kind of social anxiety and insecurity of slowing down, and it's out of his comfort zone to stop and connect. He has this story that, you know, people are busy, they don't really want to connect with him. I mean, how many of us can relate to some of that?

[00:22:40] I certainly can't. Oh yeah. Yep. But it was amazing that through this slowing down process, he didn't just stay in the pattern, but he started to become aware of himself in this process and decided, you know what? I'm gonna start being with that discomfort and being vulnerable as a leader, cuz I'm asking other people to do that in this work.



[00:23:03] And started to reach out, stop and say hello and connect and start to build that. Relational trust with his team and colleagues because he also knows that if he hasn't invested in building that relational network and that kind of trust, that when the time comes that somebody would need to come to him maybe with some challenge or an issue around d e I.

[00:23:29] If that foundation hasn't been created, they're gonna be less likely to bring things forward and in openness. So I started doing it and, you know, had to manage his own fears and insecurities and awkwardness, but continued to persevere. So, you know, that's an example of a very small thing, but he said he could tell people were immediately responding.

[00:23:54] Yeah. And appreciating it.

[00:23:56] **Carolyn:** And we know what's going on, right? That our nervi, well, I'm not saying we all know, but, um, what the research is starting to show us is that our nervous systems are always talking to each other. I. Am I safe? What signals or cues am I getting looking up? Am I safe or am I feeling that I can be seen or heard?

[00:24:16] And so, you know, I think that's such a great example exactly of if somebody is, is busy and rushed and good intentions, maybe up here in the cognitive part. Mm-hmm. But if the brain is feeling that anxiety or that hurriedness. It just might be that little cue of, oh, just, just be careful. Just watch out.

[00:24:36] Mm-hmm. And just recognizing, yeah, what an amazing story. And he just was able, you know, to regulate his nervous system, bring it back into a calmer state, which creates a better environment for co-regulation. Meaning our nervous systems can talk to each other and be, be together in a little bit more of a safe space.

[00:24:55] **Anakha:** Right. I think that point you just brought up is such an important one that, that part of our nervous system called Neuroception belong Below conscious awareness is always scanning the environment. Am I safe? Do I belong? Am I safe? Do I belong? Yeah. So if you start to address those things



and ourselves and in our team ahead of time, like this example, People's resources aren't all gonna be consumed with that.

[00:25:26] Yeah. You know, we start to be able to settle and then we can access insight and creativity and connection and all those kind of awesome, yummy prosocial Yeah. Capacities.

[00:25:37] **Carolyn:** Yeah. And, and it, it is about finding that space, right? That space in between, I don't know the quote about that, but it's been a big part of my learning is, is learning to embrace the inaction.

[00:25:50] And it's actually not in action. It's growth. It's space. It's a catalyst, really. Yeah.

[00:25:58] **Anakha:** Yeah. All the research that. We did at Intel and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Zappos around like pre and post. After the eight week awake at work, mindfulness program, everybody reported having more time to think, plan, reflect shifts from being in reactive mode to proactive mode.

[00:26:21] So, you know, it's like. Taking the time out expands in some ways the space to connect. You know, like we, we think that when we're on that ramped up speed that we're getting more things done, but generally that's not

[00:26:37] **Carolyn:** true. Yeah, I do remember, I. Really, really being addicted to it. It was a high, it's like, mm-hmm.

[00:26:46] Oh, look at me. Go check, check. It really was like a drug, like that dopamine hit, and really having to be patient with myself to say, it's okay, we're gonna just slow. Like even this morning, I, I had such a different start to my day and I didn't have any appointments booked with anybody. It was just me and myself from, you know, nine until noon.

[00:27:07] And I was able to be in such a different space with my work. Mm-hmm. And learning to carve out that space is hard. It's a skillset, and it is so, so worth



[00:27:20] **Anakha:** it. It is, it is. I mean, in some ways I, I won't go down this rabbit hole too far, but like our culture and capitalism Yep. Instilled in us that unless we're constantly producing and busy and achieving, That we're gonna be left behind.

[00:27:40] I think it taps into a pretty primal fear sometimes that we have to address as people, as leaders. Yep. That just because I'm going to do some reflection or pause, you know, that fear can come up and those voices can come pretty quickly. Like, you don't have time for this. This is ridiculous. This isn't getting us anywhere.

[00:28:00] Yeah. To get back to task. So I would have to say that. I am more creative and more creative intentionally and on point. Like more often, yes, when I motion lands and yields than just kind of like doing a million things, and I'm happier most days and more available and more available to respond in the moment when there is a challenge or a crisis.

[00:28:27] So it's, it's so important and I don't see things, you know, ramping down like they, they, I know. Let me just keep going.

[00:28:36] **Carolyn:** I do feel, and I'll go there a little bit with you, the whole capitalistic environment that we live in. I think that there is a healthy capitalism that we can. Come back to, I think we've gone past the point of productivity and past the point of, I guess what I would call healthy capitalism.

[00:28:55] So I think there is a place for us to talk about healthy capitalism because this incessant drive for productivity and, and you know, workload management, you know, I know that's one of the factors of psychological health and safety, and yet, Company after company, after company just continues to be on the cycle of do more with less.

[00:29:19] Figure it out. So again, I'm gonna come back to your clients cuz I, I know they're senior executives. How are they finding, like, what was it that made the light bulb moment for them where it was like, okay, I have to do this, I have to create some different practices for myself, and how are they taking that



into their teams That is allowing it to filter through other layers of the organization.

[00:29:44] Yeah,

[00:29:45] **Anakha:** we could be pushed there. We could be pulled there. Yes. That is true. Pushed by pain or pulled by vision. Yeah. And I think that they started to be pulled by a vision of what was possible and they had the courage to try it on. Hmm. And I think once you try it on and you experience your quality of presence, your quality of perception, your quality of being able to relate and.

[00:30:13] Problem solve or connect with people when you have a lived experience that wow. I am different. Something else is happening here. Then you wanna do more and more of it. I mean, I mean, I don't like to think of it necessarily like this, but it is a competitive advantage. It is, yeah. You know, that quality of presence stands out.

[00:30:36] And when these leaders would show up to their team, I mean, I remember at Intel when we first started, Doing the mindfulness program. I had a leader come into maybe the second or third iteration of awaken intel that we were offering, and I was like, Hey, Joe, you know what has you coming here? And he's like, well, every single one of my team members.

[00:30:58] Has gone through the course and when I walk into the room for our team meetings, it's like entering a force field. Like their laptops are closed, their phones are aside, and they are so present that I feel like I have to up my game.

[00:31:12] **Carolyn:** Wow. Yeah,

[00:31:13] **Anakha:** it was great and we had that happen a lot. Is that people that were maybe skeptics or were like, what is this?

[00:31:22] Would see, like I, there's an example of an engineering problem that had plagued this group for, I'd say like a good year or more. And through this program they started practicing mindful engineering. So these two engineers went off in a room, did some practices, and solved it within like a week or two.



[00:31:46] And this other manager was out on sabbatical. And when he came back he was like, How did you do this? What is this? How'd you do this? Right. So I mean, it see sounds like magical, but it just is giving us access to a greater intelligence within us, in between us. Yeah. And we know that their own neural network, it's not only in the head brain, but you know, going the cardiac nervous system and the enteric nervous system.

[00:32:13] And there's all these neural networks here. So when we pause, And even if we just tune into a sensation in our body or a feeling or take a couple breaths, the more we do that throughout the day, it's kind of like a bank deposit. You know? Like, yes, it's time we practice. Even if it doesn't feel good, even if we think we don't do a good job of it, it really doesn't matter.

[00:32:37] We're more and more present as we go.

[00:32:40] **Carolyn:** I think that's such a great point that you made. Even if we don't think it's working or we're not getting the check mark or the immediate gratification or immediate insight, it is still happening. It is, and I do think that the gratification I. Comes sooner than we might realize if we're patient.

[00:33:00] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Mm-hmm. Yeah. What about teams? So, you know, you talked about entering into that force field. Yeah. Wow. That that's powerful and, and hey, that speaks to the work that's being done when somebody shows up and like, I need to know what's going on here cuz my team is exercising this. What might be one thing then that a team can do from your perspective to bring a little bit more presence into their meeting?

[00:33:26] **Anakha:** I mean, I think even just giving a minute, 30 seconds for people to arrive and transition. And just pause again. It takes courage because they're, oh, my team's gonna think this is weird, or that I'm rude. Yeah, it's, it's really a best practice. So just again, the beauty of the pause, Dr. Rema talks about how important that is, uh, especially as we approach some of these challenging issues of race and gender and different things in the workplace.

[00:33:57] But just the beauty of the pause, I'm checking in with people like what's top of heart and mind today? You know, in a few words, you know, if you



can even just setting aside five minutes for kind of a team, you know, ecology, practice, like we're gonna keep anything that needs to be addressed today. Anything that anyone needs, you can have some prompts and some invitation for people to share.

[00:34:22] And in the beginning, people might not. You know, be run into, you know, sign up for it, but that doesn't matter. Keep doing it. I mean, they're gonna look for leadership, intention and consistency with some of these

[00:34:34] **Carolyn:** things. Absolutely. And I'm gonna come back to one of the things that you brought up earlier, which is the comfort with the discomfort.

[00:34:41] Mm-hmm. And as someone who has facilitated many meetings, the discomfort of silence can be very, very difficult. And yet, If you give space and silence, somebody will step into it and it will get the ball rolling. Definitely will. Yeah. Got it. So much of it about his discomfort. One more thing I just wanna touch on before we start wrapping up is, is this comment that you made to me in our initial meet and greet, I guess we'll call our intro call mm-hmm.

[00:35:16] Was this notion of rehumanizing ourselves. What does that mean to you? Rehumanizing ourselves. Hmm.

[00:35:26] **Anakha:** You know, I think I have this image of sometimes we're going through life like frozen ice cubes, you know, bumping into each other and bouncing off, and I think that's can be really true. Like the more we have a mask on, the more we have defenses.

[00:35:46] So some of it is these practices will connect us back to our own humanity, our own heart and emotions, our own. Body and the challenges of living in a body and all of those things. So it's really practicing first step close in, which is how do I recognize myself? As a human who's worthy of rest and care and a pause.

[00:36:12] But as soon as we start to practice that wherever we start with others or with ourselves, I think we start to listen different. We start to see different, we start to care different. It can change the whole. By above a team or an



organization. When we start to do that, and I think with the speed that we operate and how quickly we make our minds up about other people, who's in and who's out, who's okay and who's not, and allow people, allow ourselves to grow beyond who we were and allow other people to grow and evolve as well.

[00:36:46] Like I always say, would, would you want somebody to freeze you in your worst moment? Yeah. And have that be the perceptions. There's an accountability in reclaiming our humanity to not freeze ourselves in some sort of fixed identity and let ourselves continue to grow and evolve. Mm-hmm. And also let other people do the same.

[00:37:09] And these practices, I think do connect us with more empathy and compassion and the ability discern, you know, I always say love is both support and challenge. It's not love if we can't wield both. So sometimes be challenging. Yep. Ourselves and each other to to step up to realize more of our capacity.

[00:37:32] Yeah.

[00:37:32] **Carolyn:** And with that challenge comes discomfort again. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Ah, thank you so much for diving into all this work 25 years ago when it wasn't on a lot of people's radars. Yeah, I mean, you really are leaning the way and the results that you've had with these executive teams and organizations. It really is quite striking Annika.

[00:38:00] It really is. Mm-hmm. Thank you. Yeah. Can we head in and close off with my three questions that I am

[00:38:08] **Anakha:** excited and ready to hear questions?

[00:38:11] **Carolyn:** So these three questions all have to do with. My evolved leadership model, which was all based in being trauma informed and the importance of that. And so the first question is about self-awareness.

[00:38:23] I'd invite you, Anika to share with us a moment that was really uncomfortable for you. Maybe there was some reactivity you learned about



yourself, but something that really, really taught you something that you didn't know about yourself.

[00:38:36] **Anakha:** Mm-hmm. Well, when you said 25 years ago, I kind of flashed on myself in my late twenties, and there was a moment where I had a couple of companies, a PR firm and an internet company.

[00:38:52] I had the husband and the house and the dogs, and I remember waking up and going, I have all this. Am I just supposed to live in it? I'm not here. I'm not here in this. Wow. And yeah, and that was a pivotal moment where I'm like, I'm not here. I was just kind of executing to culture and families and what I thought I should do and be, but there was an emptiness that I recognized, so I started to take those things apart and that's really what started me on this journey of.

[00:39:28] Healing and somatics and leadership and self as instrument and that our leadership is only as powerful as the work we do inside. So it was really that moment of discomfort. It was a very inconvenient awareness. Yeah. To have.

[00:39:47] **Carolyn:** I can only imagine cuz so much was tied up in that. But these inconvenient awarenesses, if that's even a word, I just made it up.

[00:39:55] Yeah. They come to us. And clearly your body was paying attention to

[00:39:59] **Anakha:** it. Yeah, something had me, yeah. Um, it was early in the morning waking up and just like, So that really set things in motion very early. Yeah. I think I had some fear like, okay, am we gonna have children and bring children into this? And some deeper part of me knew that I wasn't really here.

[00:40:16] Mm-hmm.

[00:40:17] **Carolyn:** Wow. Thank you for sharing that. Mm-hmm. Second question is around regulation and our nervous systems. We've talked a little bit about that today. So what is a practice or ritual that helps keep you in a regulated state or brings you back to a regulated



[00:40:35] **Anakha:** state, you know, movement, you know, whether it's going for a walk or yoga or dance, or even being in the gym.

[00:40:45] It, it's almost like get my body and motion and it. Will take care of itself, especially when I'm out in nature. But here's the one that I discovered this year that is like a secret superpower of our nervous system regulator, and that's empathetic listening. We talked about reclaiming Wow. Community. Yeah.

[00:41:05] That you know, if there's a challenge. If I can choose to start to really go into empathetic listening, really putting myself aside and really reflecting back as accurately I can when I'm hearing someone say about what they're thinking and feeling, I. I start to regulate, my nervous system starts to regulate.

[00:41:27] I start to see them more as human and less as a threat. Then that co-regulation can happen, and I never knew what a powerful tool for regulation empathetic listening is. Wow.

[00:41:42] **Carolyn:** Yeah. I know in one of the workshops that I do, we talk about. Using the words or like emotions. Mm-hmm. And using that to listen. So we do this little exercise and I, they're not allowed to talk, but they have to pick out a list of emotions they heard in the person's story.

[00:42:03] And it's been amazing how it's allowed them to live it, listen on a deeper level. Mm-hmm. And even if they don't pick the same word that the person who, who is telling the story, I don't even wanna say Right. But they don't pick the same word. They're finding that connection is still there and is still strong.

[00:42:19] And that sounds very much what like you're talking about, is that empathetic listening.

[00:42:24] **Anakha:** Yeah, it's, there's something, when I use exactly the words that somebody else has said is I start to get a sense of them in my own psyche and body, and then I start to see them as human and not as a threat. So the more I practice defense, yeah, explanation, judgment.



[00:42:42] That tells my nervous system there's threat. I'm not safe, I don't belong, but as soon as I am able to, and I don't always choose it, I don't always practice it, but when I do, it just changes everything in my own nervous system. So that's a superpower one that I've learned, you know? Yeah. Fear. Wow, we're back.

[00:43:03] Yeah.

[00:43:04] **Carolyn:** Wow. That's great. We're gonna, I'm gonna try that. I'm gonna try that. Yeah. And so the last one is around music. So what is a song or genre of music that makes you feel connected to others or bigger than just yourself?

[00:43:18] **Anakha:** Yeah. You know what's really funny is that, you know, I grew up in a small town and had horses and pickup trucks and country music.

[00:43:28] Yeah. So country music does it for me. And I know some people might be like hearing like the fingernails on the chalkboard experience about, but there's something about it that connects me to my roots. And I grew up in a town that didn't have stop lights. Wow. We had a movie theater, no shopping malls. And, um, I'm really grateful for that because I spent a lot of time outside and a lot of time creating.

[00:43:52] And there's something about that, just real basic bumping around in an old pickup truck out in the middle of nowhere feeling that I get, that has me feel connected to place and to people.

[00:44:05] **Carolyn:** I think country music is deeply connecting. Like just the emotion. I love country music. My dad used to listen to very old country, like, I don't know what you'd call it now.

[00:44:16] I know there's lots of different types of country, but there is something that's very like the storytelling and the depth and yeah. So I'm with you. Yeah, I think there are a lot of country fans out there. More than they realize. Is there a certain artist? Is there certain artist? Yeah.



[00:44:31] **Anakha:** My favorite right now is Laney Wilson.

[00:44:33] What I love about her is she's full on country, but she also is like, so in her style, she wears flair, fun, funky clothes, and she has a song called Heart Like a Truck. And one of the lines is like, it's, you know, been drugg through the mud, runs on dreams and gasoline. Oh. And I really relate to that.

[00:44:56] **Carolyn:** So, yeah.

[00:44:57] Wow. Is she, is she the one that was on Yellowstone? She is. Yes. Yes. She had a cool vibe. She had a cool vibe. Yeah, she does. Wonderful. Well, Annika, not only do I have some new songs in my music rotation. Yeah. I am really, really grateful that our paths crossed and that you were able to come on the show. For any of our listeners who wanna get in touch with you, what's the best way to do that?

[00:45:18] Or could they find you? You

[00:45:20] **Anakha:** could find me@annikakoman.com, and you could search for me on LinkedIn as well. That might be another way to, for me, but annika koman.com is an easy

[00:45:30] **Carolyn:** way. All right. Sounds good. And we'll make sure that those details are in the show notes. And thanks again. It's been a real pleasure speaking with you.

[00:45:39] Likewise.

[00:45:39] **Anakha:** I feel joy and excitement for you and your book coming out, and for both of us, and for everyone that, Hmm. Is being able to receive what you're sharing and what I'm sharing, because I think it's a vision of hope when we start to build these capacities. So thank you.

[00:45:56] **Carolyn:** Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, I am feeling a calm and peaceful presence.



[00:46:04] Hey, maybe an eagles. Song comes to mind, a peaceful, easy feeling. That conversation with Annika was full of so much insight and real life experience of the power of somatic work and the power of seeing the wisdom within our body. I hope you learned a little bit. I hope you maybe will find some space to try some of the practices we talked about and.

[00:46:35] Even, you know, the practice that we did together, it's a journey. Leadership definitely is a journey. And thank you for listening to the podcast for being committed to your own leadership journey, and I'll invite you to like and subscribe and rate our podcast. It would mean a lot to us as well. If you would like to buy my book, you can find it on Amazon as well.

[00:47:02] Evolve the path to trauma informed leadership. Thanks so much for listening, and we'll see you again soon.