



## 025: How to Show Up as Your Most Authentic Self with Sandhya Sudhakar

**Sandhya:** [00:00:00] Giving your people the tools to help themselves in the situations that don't need to require you as the leader to fix the problems. Yes. So can we emotionally regulate better knowing and having the awareness of what are the things that are gonna trigger me the most that have to do with that core motivation?

And then it's like, okay, now as a leader, your time gets freed up to actually work on strategies and priorities and breaking down problems with your people versus. The little interpersonal, nitpicky things that if your team had the tools and the resources to regulate around those themselves, you wouldn't have to have all your time spent on that.

**Carolyn:** My guest today is Sandia Satcher. Sandia is a certified leadership and career coach, Enneagram practitioner, speaker, facilitator. And the founder of Self At Work, she takes a trauma-informed inclusive approach to leadership, development and wellbeing [00:01:00] At work, she helps leaders build meaningful connections with themselves, their teams, and their work so they can achieve breakthrough business results without burning out their employees or themselves.

Seven years ago, I had to pick a topic for my research paper for my master's in industrial and organizational psychology. The topic I chose continues to be something I'm extremely curious about, and that is authentic leadership theory. Now, a lot has happened in seven years. A lot more research, a lot more has happened in our world, and the conversation that Sandia and I have today is all about authenticity in the workplace.



My paper would definitely be different now than it was seven years ago. I hope you enjoy this [00:02:00] conversation. As we talk about what authenticity looks like at work, is it even achievable? And we'll also weave in some references to a tool that both Sandia and I think is very valuable in helping people understand who their true, authentic self is.

**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.

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.[00:03:00]

**Carolyn:** I'm Carolyn Soura, and this is Evolve a new era of leadership. Hello, evolve listeners. Welcome to another episode of our podcast, evolve a New Era of Leadership. And today's guest, I'm really excited to have her on because we're gonna talk about a topic that is near and dear to my heart and hers. So welcome to the show, sander.

**Sandhya:** Thank you. It's great to be here. I

**Carolyn:** I was thinking of this last night before. We're recording just about our topic that we're gonna dive into today, which is one of authenticity. Now I know that you, you are the founder of Self At Work, which in its title just shows out how important authenticity is to you.

So I'm curious to hear what does work and authenticity, how do those two go together? We're gonna get into it like right out of the bat, right outta the gate.

**Sandhya:** Yeah, let's go for the big question right [00:04:00] away. When I was really reflecting back as I started my business, I was reflecting back on my own career and thinking about like what were the reasons where I never really felt fully connected to my job.



I never really, fully, fully, I was accepted in my job. Like all of these different things that were going on in my career, and ultimately at the end of the day, My story of starting my business began with a seven month sabbatical and, and didn't intend to start a business, but it came out of that. And what I really wanted to do was kind of reflect back my own experience of self-discovery over the sabbatical and the years leading up to that where I was like, what do I bring to the table?

What am I great at? What do I love to do and how do I actually bring like all of that right into the work that I wanna do? And so it's really about, I. This idea of we all bring natural strengths and talents and ways of being to our [00:05:00] community, the world. How do we bring that into our work too? And really like I.

Deeply embrace who we are and be able to share that with the world.

**Carolyn:** Yeah. Yeah. And so were you traveling in those seven months? I was, yeah. Yeah, yeah. I, I hear that. I'm not somebody who made that choice and I do regret it. I don't feel like I traveled enough when I was younger. And I'm curious, like I understand you had like a corporate career before this in a large organization.

What did that space between. Being in that big machine of organization and the time to travel and experience a different sort of perspective, what did that do? Like tell us a little bit about that journey for you. So

**Sandhya:** I had worked for a big Fortune 50 company for 13 years, and I knew that. I didn't wanna do that, but I didn't know what I wanted to do and so I dabbled in a couple of other companies and industries for the next few years and I was like kind of searching, [00:06:00] you know, just like trying to figure out like, where's my place?

And when I got to the, I guess I would say maybe the breaking point of that experience where I just felt really empty and unmotivated and I'm somebody who loves to work and loves to produce and contribute. I found myself feeling



so empty. I was like, who is this person? Right? And so what I knew was that I needed to take some time where I was not going to like work on any goals.

Right. For the first time. Right. It was like, there's no thing that I am working toward trying to accomplish, trying to check off. And so for me, I'm gonna say I designed that time. It wasn't that intentional. I just said, I'm not doing anything. Mm. Other than the things that feel exciting and fun and fulfilling to me, I'm just gonna be.

And so that space for me gave me. The opportunity to reconnect with who I am and what I [00:07:00] actually like versus, you know, this go to work, produce, hang out with your friends, like decompress from the work week. Start it all over again. Yeah. And so I had lost kind of like, what do I love? What are my hobbies?

And one of the things that emerged out of it, which was so interesting because now I feel like it's such a core part of my life, is. I had like not been reading or learning or diving into things that interested me. I've always been someone who's interested in like self-development and things like that.

But I am like totally book crazy now and courses and learning and taking in information. If you ask one of my best friends 5, 8, 10 years ago, I. We actually had a running joke that I don't read books. Oh wow. Like it was that stark of a difference. And so when I cleared out all the other stuff, I got to see like what's actually there at the core.

Yeah.

**Carolyn:** So kind of clearing out the noise, uh, to allow you to find sort of what was [00:08:00] really in you. Yeah. And so now I know you take your work now into organizations and corporate organizations. Tell us a little bit about what you do. Cause it sounds like, you know, your journey has inspired you to bring that work into a place where you kind of lost who you were.

Is that fair to say? Yeah.



**Sandhya:** Yeah, absolutely. I think I had just slowly gotten more and more disconnected from. What I actually love to do, um, what I'm really good at doing, and I kind of was just following what was in front of me, right? Yeah. The opportunities that were there. And that was great. And often, you know, especially during my time at a big corporation, those opportunities were attractive.

They were Yes. Promotions. They were more responsibility. They were higher visibility, right? So I just kind of like kept taking the, those stair steps and, and when I got to a point where I realized, I'm like, I'm at the top of this staircase and. I don't even wanna be here. Yeah. That was kind of that moment, right?

And so now I think about [00:09:00] how do I support leaders in making this environment? I. At work. Something where people can show up fully, where they know what they're right at, where they can articulate what they need and they can kind of have that sense of ease. Right. Because they feel a sense of belonging.

**Carolyn:** Yeah, and I think too, in our society today, There's so much opportunity, right? There's so many things that are saying, Hey, pick me. Pick me. Cuz I have a, you know, a similar sort of perspective from my time. I had all these different opportunities that were thrown my way and like, sure, that sounds great, that sounds great.

And then 17 years in I'm like, what just happened? How did I get here? And so I think it's coaches like you and people like you who can help individuals, I'd say earlier in their career. Make more intentional decisions because there are so many opportunities available and it's not just the loudest voice or the [00:10:00] shiniest ball that needs to, you know, deserves our attention.

**Sandhya:** There's two things in what you said that I think are so important, and you and I both love this framework of the Enneagram, right? And, and as I was doing my own personal exploration, I got really curious and that was one of the tools that helped me kind of understand what was going on inside of my body when I kind of hit that breaking point and went on a sabbatical rate and like kind of helping me connect some dots going backwards in my life.



And

**Sandhya:** through my study of that framework, what I'm seeing is this like beautiful way that like so many different people bring their gifts to the world and they look very different. The gifts look different, and the way of delivering them looks different. And so then we put each of those unique people into a box that says, Your career should look like this.

You go to this box on the org chart, then this box, then this box, and the [00:11:00] leadership competencies are, you know, this, this, and this. And their assertiveness and you know, vision and whatever it is, right? And so we get into this place where there's like one way to be successful. Yep. And studying the Enneagram, right?

And now observing and working with teams and leaders, it's just opened up this world of like, there are so many ways to be successful. And that comes in gifts, it comes in style of working, it comes in all these different ways, right? So it's really helped for me solidify. It's how do we be intentional about the choices and make the choices that are best for us versus just the things that happen to be in front of us, right?

Yeah. Or that we get conditioned to believe are the best next steps in our career. Yeah. And the

**Carolyn:** Enneagram, that framework too helped me professionally and personally. I mean, I went on my own huge journey with it and realized there were so many things that I had used to be successful. [00:12:00] That I realized were not allowing me to truly be authentic, which seems like such a paradox and it's why I use, and I'm sure you're the same way.

It's a non-negotiable. I use this tool with every client. I'm like, if we really wanna get real about being authentic and being your real self at work, then we need to use a tool that was designed. Not for a psychometric assessment, but designed instead to help us get in touch with who we truly are. Now, we're not gonna go into a whole Enneagram episode.



Maybe that would be for another time, but I think the path to find your true, authentic self, to me it is. There's no other tool out there, and this notion of authenticity in the workplace is, I think used a little bit too freely because you and I both know we can't always bring our full, authentic self to the workplace.

So can we go there for a little bit and talk about, yes, we wanna find our authenticity, [00:13:00] but you know, what else do we need to add on to this and what do we need to bring into this authenticity? Conversation at work.

**Sandhya:** Yeah. I think the idea of being your full, authentic self at work and there's this great article about, you know, stop telling women they have imposter syndrome.

Oh, it's an an HPR article.

**Carolyn:** I love that article. We're gonna put it in the show notes.

**Sandhya:** Yeah, please do. Because I think this is where this conversation goes wrong, right? It goes off a cliff in a bad way. Is that not everybody is. Accepted when they're bringing their full, authentic selves to work, right? It is a privilege to say, I can show up at work with my hair, or the way it grows out of my head and speaking the way that is most true to me and all of these things, right?

Bringing my familial values. I, you know, I've been talking a lot lately about like Asian Americans and this kind of humility and harmony. These values were. Those get in the way of self-promoting and advocating for your career and those [00:14:00] things, right? Yeah. So there's all these cultural, familial heritage influences.

There are lived experience influences, right? So if we bring those authentic pieces into the workplace, they're not accepted, they're not seen as the right way to be often. And so the conversation becomes, We need to equip the people that show up to work with this. Kind of like being able to be really grounded in who they are and how they work best and what they need, and being able to have that kind of clarity to articulate that, which comes along with all the things that you love.



Self-awareness. Self-regulation. Yeah. Doing that inner work. And they need to arrive into an environment that embraces. Their authenticity. That is an inclusive environment. And you know, there's a spectrum of inclusion where, you know, maybe one day people will show up at their jobs and will design the roles for them and their talent and the [00:15:00] way they work.

That's not how we operate today. Yeah. We have boxes, we have job postings, we have things like that. Right. So I think there's this element of. It has to be that you ask people to show up fully and that you provide them the flexibility and the leeway to be able to work the way that they can and want to invest work.

**Carolyn:** Hence, no one is an imposter at work because you are showing up as yourself. When people talk about imposter syndrome, it takes everything in me not to interrupt and say, no, no, no, no, no. We're not centering around one persona. And I'm not even gonna say what that persona is because we all know what it is.

And it's not about singling out one group. It's about recognizing what you just said, is that how do we shape our systems and our expectations to honor what each person brings? And that is hard, right? Because there's no formula, there's no algorithm, there's no checklist that [00:16:00] we can follow. And it means if we're gonna accept others to show up fully.

We have to start with ourselves first, and that's hard. It's easier to look into other people and let other people do their work and not do our own.

**Sandhya:** Yeah. And I, I think there are some small practical ways that a leader can start to do that work with their team, right? Ultimately, yes. Could we like burn down the whole system?

I would love that. You know, and, and yeah, that's not gonna happen. Free flowing thing, right? But I'm also, you know, I come from a corporate background, like I feel like structure, right? And so we do need systems, but how can we maybe interpret our systems in a way that gives more. Freedom for people to be the way that they do their best work.





So things like leadership competencies, right? Every big company has this checklist of five, 10 things that they say in order to get promoted or be an executive or whatever it is, you have to do these things. [00:17:00] You know, that's the, what do they allow for a different how? So things like being able to inspire people, being able to motivate people.

Being able to empower people. You know, and you talk a lot about head, heart, and body, right? Yeah. It's like create the idea, connect them to the idea, and give them the tools they need to go do the work. Yeah. Leaders, if they can do those three things, they're gonna be successful. But there are a million ways to inspire.

There are a million ways to motivate. There are a million ways to empower, but what we tend to do in organizations is say, You have to empower by doing it this way. Yeah. You have to inspire by having, you know, I'm using air quotes leadership presence, which means you're loud and you're confident and you project this certain persona.

Right. So I think if we can start to. Find different, hows into the objective? That's how we can start to [00:18:00] break down some of the systems without tearing the whole thing down. Right. Yeah. Cause we do need

**Carolyn:** that. Absolutely. Absolutely. What are some of those things that you do with individuals and teams to help them find their different how?

Yeah, and

**Sandhya:** one of the things that I love to do the most, so again, like thinking about motivation is a big one, right? If we can tap into intrinsic motivation, I. We are like fueling ourselves, right? If we can find ways to connect the work that we do to the things that really deeply matter to us. And so thinking, having those conversations, understanding what motivates different people, how does that show up for them?

How do you manage as a leader, manage the individual based on what motivates them? And that, you know, comes down into very tangible things like,



Everybody likes to be recognized a different way. I like to be given an award and like put on a stage, right? That's me. But there are so many people who would be mortified and that would actually be demotivating.

And so being able to just have those more [00:19:00] nuanced conversations around the, what does recognition and reward look like for you? For some people it might be, I want to have more control over the things I do. I want more autonomy, or I want to be able to go represent our company at a conference. Like those things motivate me, right?

So those types of little things. And then the second big bucket of things that I would say is like, how do you design for differences? Mm In work style in people who might be more systems thinkers. Don't ask them to show up in a meeting with no pre-reading and ask them for their best idea on the spot.

Yeah. So those are things, right. I think it's interesting cuz as I start to like break down things with teams around norms or, you know, meeting hygiene and like how do we make effective meetings? Most of the information is there. It's out there. It's just that we have kind of lost a sense of discipline around.

Yep. Why is it important to make sure everybody's equipped to do their best thinking in the meeting? We forget [00:20:00] to do it, but when we can tie it back to this enables better work, more productive and effective communication. It helps to really like solidify, okay, here's how we wanna structure our meetings in a way to bring out everybody's best.

Yeah.

**Carolyn:** You commented there around the motivator and really getting in touch with that. I agree wholeheartedly, and I'm gonna circle back to our Enneagram training. So you and I both know that a big piece of this Enneagram work when we truly get to know ourselves, is that we believe we're being motivated for one reason.

When. The core belief behind that motivator is a little bit flawed. So why is the Enneagram a useful tool for you then? Or how do you bring that in to help



people recognize that what they think is the driving motivator might actually be something different?

**Sandhya:** Yeah, it's a great question. I think there's a piece actually that [00:21:00] even though these things are kind of false motivators to some extent, right?

Like for a type three to be seen as successful and to have this image,

I.

**Sandhya:** We can also use those things for good and not for evil in a way. So, you know, we live in a world where we do have to think about harm reduction and protecting ourselves, and we wear makeup when we go outta the house, even though we shouldn't have to worry about that.

You know, it's just like little things that we do to like cope in this world, right? Mm-hmm. To show up in a way where we feel safe. And so I actually think we can use. The core motivation in a way that helps us when we use it with agency, it is very different than when we use it in a reactive, patterned way.

Yes. So if I know that my image is important to me, that doesn't mean that I'm gonna be so evolved that I never care about my image, I stopped caring about it. Right. Right. And how do I use that knowledge, right. That [00:22:00] awareness to say, I do wanna be put on a list that goes out in an email to the whole company of people who did a good job, because that's important to me.

Those things still fuel us, but I think the agency piece is where, love it. We can start to make a little bit of a shift. Right.

**Carolyn:** Yeah. What I hear in there too is intention. So when I do ask for my name to be on that list, or when I am asked, how do I like the recognition? Yes. I say it with that agency and recognize, this is the other piece that I found really useful with Enneagram is and recognize that other people don't want that necessarily, and to respect that and not feel inclined to judge it and think



**Sandhya:** that it's wrong.

Yes, a hundred percent. And I think the other side of this is, I've been thinking about this idea of just how hard it is to be a leader right now. Mm. Yes. I think it is. Harder in this current moment to be a leader in a company than it [00:23:00] has ever been before. Yep. And I hear my friends who are VPs of marketing and HR get big companies.

Right. And they're, they're getting lots of humanity all the time coming from their direct reports. Right. And it's everything from. I am burned out. I'm overwhelmed. This thing happened on the news, and I am just like devastated. Or I'm having an issue with this person and I can't figure it out, and I'm gonna vent for half of my one-on-one to you.

Yeah. All of these things are happening, right? And so the other side of this is understanding our motivation. And learning the self-regulation skills. Right. Which set in not you and i's terms, but real people's terms is like giving your people the tools to help themselves. Yeah. In the situations that don't need to require you as the leader to fix the problems.

Yes. Yep. So can we emotionally regulate better [00:24:00] knowing and having the awareness of what are the things that are gonna trigger me the most that have to do with that core motivation? Yep. And then it's like, okay, now as a leader, your time gets freed up to like actually work on strategies and priorities and breaking down problems with your people versus the little interpersonal kind of nitpicky things that if your team had.

The tools and the resources to regulate around those themselves. You wouldn't have to have all your time spent on that.

**Carolyn:** Yeah, yeah. I hear you. I mean, one of the best statements I think that can help is what does support look like? I hear you, and how can I help? I did that with my kids. I know they're not listening to this episode.

Well, they probably don't listen to any of my podcasts, but you know, when they were growing up, and one of my children in particular likes to like give us a



running diatribe of what's in his head, and I learned early on in his teens, it's like, what would you like me to do? Because my initial inclination was, oh my [00:25:00] gosh, you're telling this to me because you want me to fix it?

And as I started to do that, he would stop and I'd be like, I don't know. I guess I just wanted you to know. I'm like, okay, great. I hear you. Is there anything else? And sometimes it would be no, and sometimes it would be yes. And I think that's a similar situation. You know, we wanna help, well, I'm a type two, so of course I wanna help.

So that's my natural in clinician. Or just asking what is it that they need? You know, when people are coming into the office and as you said, like. Bringing that humanity in. What do you need right now? I need to be able to talk about some strategy, some of the projects. Can we make time for that today? And asking the other person what they need as well.

**Sandhya:** Yeah. I wouldn't advocate for saying like, everybody should just fix their problems themselves, you know, their emotional interpersonal problems, and then come to the one-on-ones just to talk about strategy. Right. It may have sounded a bit like that, but I think that to your point, it's. [00:26:00] Maybe someone does need to vent for 10 minutes.

Exactly. And it takes that time, right? Yeah. Yep. But even just the amount of overwhelm and burnout and anxiety and all the things that are happening right now, I don't think the majority of people on teams know what they need.

**Carolyn:** Oh, a hundred

**Sandhya:** percent. And so one, I'm just asking the question as the leader, right?

It's gonna make them think about that. Like just like you with your son to say, oh wait, what do I need right now? But I think this kind of digging in and really understanding yourself better, getting underneath the surface to like, why do I do the things that I do can also help people find that clarity to be able to articulate, okay, how can you as a leader, support me?



**Carolyn:** Circles back to what we were talking about at the very beginning of the podcast when you had all that noise around you and you took time to, and yes, you traveled. So I'm not implying that we're all gonna need to go travel, but it's that

**Sandhya:** everybody quit your jobs.

**Carolyn:** I know that'd be nice, but not gonna happen.

It's [00:27:00] finding that space to reconnect again with what it is that you need. And I really, I really, really appreciate that point. And as a leader, when we can stop and ask people what they need, It's like, oh my gosh, I, I actually don't know what the hell it is that I need. But that moment can then just help reroute some behavior to start thinking a little bit more about it.

So, yes. Well, we might be at a really difficult point in leadership, and I agree again wholeheartedly with you on that. I think being a leader right now is harder than ever. Do you believe that we're also at a really pivotal. Point that could transform leadership into a different level.

**Sandhya:** Yeah. I mean, if I didn't believe that, I wouldn't be here on this podcast with you right now.

Right. It's, it's this idea of, I think we just need to change the way we think about leading, because even five [00:28:00] years ago, it used to be that you could expect your people. To kind of leave their life problems at home. Yeah. And that would be great, right? And then you could really focus on priorities and strategies and resource allocation, all the things that you do as a leader.

But the state of our world in this moment, I don't believe, allows that anymore. And so as a leader now, you are balancing. Humanity and productivity more. And so if you can upskill yourself in terms of understanding more about what might get in people's ways. Right. I think leaders getting like true coaching skills to be able to ask the open-ended questions.



Yep. To help people get there on their own. Like those are all things that I think are going to become even more exponentially important. Is that, How can you as a leader, [00:29:00] shift from really just focusing on like Okay. The to-dos and connecting, right, and finding spaces to connect. Yep. Yeah.

**Carolyn:** And that whole notion of connection is really when we feel seen and heard, which you know, which is belonging.

And at the end of the day, we want to belong. It's in our brain, it's wired in our brain. It's not a nice to have. It is a absolute fundamental element of us as human beings. Are there any other sort of perspectives or insights around belonging or authenticity that you want to bring into the conversation that we haven't yet addressed?

Yeah.

**Sandhya:** I think one of the things that, for me about authenticity, and this is, you know, my ideal client that I love to work with the most, I love to work with all of my clients, right? But the one that I love to work with the most is oftentimes a woman of color. In a high level leadership position. [00:30:00] And the thing about authenticity is that when you get to that point, when you get to these higher levels of leadership for anybody, oftentimes authenticity is more about unlearning than it is about learning.

Just can you say more about that? Yeah. You know, we have these trainings and management training and communication training and how to give feedback and all these things, right? These are skill sets. They're tactical things. Authenticity speaks to who are you at your core, and so. When I talk to leaders, um, when I'm doing one-on-one sessions, I hear these, oh, I have this lesson that I picked up here, or I had this experience and I learned that I had to be this way, or I had to start to shift the way that I speak because that was the thing that got me to this place of success.

And so what I love doing the most is helping people kind of take inventory of all those things that they've taken on to [00:31:00] say. Which of these things is really still important to you? Oh, interesting. Which, which of these things



represent you? We take on all these things because we want to get to that position of power.

Once we're in that position of power, we've forgotten about. Who we are sometimes, right? And so how do we bring ourselves back to the table? How do we, especially once you get into a leadership role, how do you start to reintegrate yourself? And that comes with the unlearning of I, I thought I had to be a certain way or I had to shift this thing about myself.

**Carolyn:** Wow. Yeah. Which links back to leadership competencies as well, cuz they define what success looks like, which is typically sort of a binary persona.

**Sandhya:** Yeah, and you may have had an experience in one company where they drilled into you that you couldn't be a certain way or talk a certain way or do a certain thing, and then you carry that with you into the next company where actually that environment may not require you to abandon that thing.

[00:32:00] Right. Still. But we don't stop to really. It's all about slowing down, right? About slowing down, having the space and doing that process of like decompressing and deconditioning and all those things. So there are reasons we do it and we carry all those things with us and it's like what bags can you put down right at that point to kind of return to yourself, right?

That's what I think is a really big piece of authenticity. And so

**Carolyn:** how does one continue to stay authentic when there's so much noise going on around us?

**Sandhya:** I think it's a moving target, which is maybe like a weird thing to say about authenticity because it's like, oh, it's who you are. True to your core. We change, we evolve, right?

Your podcast

is





**Sandhya:** called Evolve. We as humans are not the same humans that we were five years ago. We're not gonna do the same in five years, and so, I think it comes down to like making the space on a regular basis, whether that's once a year to check in or even [00:33:00] quarterly with your team to take a half day.

And the only objective is to connect and to reflect and to explore who you are and those types of things. It's like this maintenance thing, right? Yeah. Of where and when and how can you find the space to like come back and maybe do that inventory and see. How do I want to be? Am I being the way that I want to show up in the world?

What do I need to do in order to like close that gap? Yeah.

**Carolyn:** And are we as a team showing up the way that we want to as well? Yeah. What would you recommend to leaders listening right now and they think, oh my gosh, I've got 50,000 projects. I don't have time to stop and look back. What would you say to a client who would say that to you?

**Sandhya:** Yeah, I would say that it's like, Running your car on like the fumes at the end of your gas tank, you can do it, but at some point that's gonna stop working [00:34:00] well. And everything that you do around the strategy and the process and the priorities and the business stuff is gonna be enhanced if you can have that connection.

Yeah, and especially with remote and hybrid work right now. We used to rely on the informal times, the lunchroom, the whatever, water cooler chitchat before meetings to like keep our team connected. And that's not happening anymore. Mm-hmm. So what we can do is all of that time that might have happened kind of or organically.

Take that. Take a day, do an offsite twice a year for a full day. Yep. And just allow your team to connect and work on professional development of themselves and their own authenticity and things like that. It's the thing that's going to fuel the team. And there's so much research around trust and being the core tenant of a highly effective team, you cannot [00:35:00] build trust without personal connection.



Yep. So the answer is you have to make time, otherwise you'll keep doing what you're doing and eventually the gas tank will run out.

**Carolyn:** Exactly. Or people will quit or you will burn out and you know, there goes the cycle, the spinning, and it just doesn't stop. Yeah. Uh, well, I am so happy that you came on to talk to us.

I know we just met, but I do feel like our work, our perspectives are so aligned and I would love to ask you the three evolved leader questions that I ask all the guests that come on. Would that be all right? Sure. Yeah. Awesome. And now before we do that, where can the listeners find you?

**Sandhya:** You can find me on my website, which is [self@work.com](mailto:self@work.com).

I am pretty active on LinkedIn, so you can just look me up by my name or on Instagram. I'm at Self at Work Sandia,

**Carolyn:** so Awesome. All right, well, we'll make sure that those links are in the show notes as well. [00:36:00] Now over to the three questions. So the first question is all about self-awareness, which is a big theme that we talked about today.

What is an example, a, a situation that might have been mighty uncomfortable, but provided you a ton of insight about yourself?

**Sandhya:** I can think of like two distinct things that in recent years were really interesting and they both centered around kind of the same theme. And it was, I had to communicate something to a person that I felt was either going to disappoint them or make them not like me.

Mm. And being somebody who really wants to be liked and seen as valuable and all of these things, what my experience of, of both of those moments where they were very similar in terms of I could feel the adrenaline pumping in my body before even thinking about what I wanted to say or how to bring this conversation up. [00:37:00]



I could feel this kind of. Fear and potential rejection and those things, I think. For me, like a lot of my own evolution as a human, as a leader has been about slowing down to build a better relationship with my emotions and Yep. Know that I have them and know that they're there and understand what information I can get from them versus I don't have time to feel, I'm just gonna go do more.

Yep. So for me, that experience, right, and I'm gonna have it again. This will continue to be the thing right when I have to. Put myself in a place where somebody will think poorly of me. I might be rejected. I can feel in my body that it is uncomfortable. Mm. And I have to know, like come back to myself to say, I am communicating something that's aligned with my values or how I wanna be treated, [00:38:00] or, What I believe is acceptable in a relationship with a person.

Right. And these are both professional things. Yep. And I have to be able to ground myself in that and get through the difficult thing. And what I've noticed is you give people the opportunity. Sometimes they will surprise you and come back with something really beautiful and sometimes they will disappoint you.

And that's like knowing that that consequence is an option is hard, but it's like, This helps you build that relationship with yourself. Mm-hmm. Which is something that I'm constantly working on. So

**Carolyn:** Yeah. It sounds like authenticity to me. I love

**Sandhya:** it. Thank you.

**Carolyn:** Now the second question, uh, is around just practices or tools that you use or might use to bring you into a state of calm or maybe a state of more regulation.

Your

**Sandhya:** nervous system. Yeah. For me, music is huge. But I know this probably ties into your next question. I was gonna say, you're gonna love the next [00:39:00] question. I use music to help. If I'm in a mood and I need to get



into a different mood, that is the way that I can connect to a feeling. And energy is something else.

Like I'm a pretty even keel, calm person. I've kind of always been that way and I. When I need to get energized, if I'm gonna do a workshop or I'm, you know, getting ready to meet people for dinner and I wanna like be my more energetic self, I'll put on, you know, Beyonce or Lizzo or like some of these songs, right?

Or if I'm feeling really anxious about something, I might put on a really calming, grounding song. And so that helps me. I guess in a way it's probably co-regulation, right? With my Spotify. Yeah.

**Carolyn:** Well it's, and I hear like in moving the emotion through you, instead of letting it get stuck in you.

**Sandhya:** Yes. That has been a really big practice of mine too, of like just, and then, you know, get up and move around or shake or do something too, maybe along with that [00:40:00] music to try to move through things or try to fuel up for something.

Yeah,

**Carolyn:** a lot of body intelligence going

**Sandhya:** on here. It's been my biggest. Learning over the last couple of years is like, oh, I have a body and it tells me information. Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, it feels like we don't live in my brain. We could do an

**Carolyn:** Enneagram podcast for heart types because that has been my journey as well too.

So it's like, oh, hi. Like welcome. It's only been 51 years since I realized that you were here with me in my head. Yeah, it's funny. Third and final question related to music. What is a song or genre of music that makes you feel connected to something bigger than yourself?



**Sandhya:** This was a hard question to answer as much as it was a fun question to answer.

Music for me is such a mood thing, but I will say lately I have had on repeat Maggie Rogers, Alaska, oh,

**Carolyn:** I'm loving her.

**Sandhya:** And this particular song, it's about, you know, I think she was in a relationship and they had an ending to a [00:41:00] relationship, and she was just walking, like walking, hiking through Alaska and like shedding things.

I, I'm getting chills right now just talking about it. I'm chills too. It's like, Her journey. And then she has such interesting influences about her folk music background. And then she went to France and had this spiritual experience with techno music and Oh wow. You know, it's just like her story too, and knowing behind, like how she came up with this song has been like really cool.

And so I like feel really connected to that song right now. Love it.

**Carolyn:** Love it. And you know, maybe when we talk again in a few months it'll be a different song, but I'm gonna go get that one on my Spotify absolutely playlist list right now too. Yeah. Well thank you so much. The time has flown by and I really appreciate your perspective and I hope our listeners reach out to you and tap into some of your wisdom as well.

Be it on social media, on your website, wherever they might find you. Maybe they'll find you traveling to listen to music somewhere

**Sandhya:** in Alaska sometime too. Yes, true. I have not been, so now I need to go.

**Carolyn:** Awesome. Thanks so much [00:42:00] for being here, and thanks to the listeners for tuning into another episode, and if you love what you've heard, please like and subscribe because there are more wonderful guests.



To be coming on the show. Thanks again for joining us. As I reflect on my conversation with Sandia about authenticity in the workplace, I can't help but think back to 2016 when I started my master's paper about authentic leadership theory. The research, the perspective, my insights, they were all a reflection of who I was back then.

And I can tell you that if I were to write about Authentic Leadership theory today, it would look quite different. It would have a broader perspective, and it would also reflect the learning and unlearning [00:43:00] that I have done. About authenticity. Thank you once again for tuning into Evolve, and if you would like to get in touch, you can reach me through [carolyn su.com](http://carolynsu.com).

Thanks again.