Ep. 54 Life's Wisdom for Kids from 1-93 (Encore)

[00:00:00]

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Welcome to the Inner Challenge podcast. As we bid farewell to 2023, my final episode of the year offers unique perspective on New Year's Resolutions. Instead of the usual self-improvement focus, I present an encore featuring a 92 year old woman, a wise elder sharing insights on her life. She embodies the essence of fun, flexibility, openness to change, managing hard and some tragic life situations, and the significance of relationships built on deep connections. In a world dominated by digital isolation, her life story emphasizes the importance of genuine conversation and understanding of those we hold the most dear. Without even intending to, she encourages us to reflect on the question: am I being a good family member and friend? Take a moment this holiday weekend and immerse yourself in her timeless wisdom and challenge yourself to make a small but meaningful resolution: [00:01:00] commit to knowing your loved ones on a deeper level. If you want some help with this, I encourage you to read David Brooks wonderful new book. How To Know A Person, after you enjoy this episode.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I want to welcome you to the podcast. I'm so happy you're with us today. And I want you to begin by introducing yourself to our audience.

Fantastic Guest!: I am 92 years young. I am the mother of five children. Best thing I did with my life was be a mother to them. Sometimes over mothering, but mostly really enjoying my life with my five kids. I had a great husband for 65 years.

Fantastic Guest!: He died 10 years ago. Miss him a lot. I'm not ready to go yet and I have filled my life with people. I'm so grateful for all the love that I have received from my kids, my grandkids, and my dear friends who I met in my job and who have remained friends in my life. Right now I [00:02:00] think my life is filled with people.

Fantastic Guest!: My family, mostly, but also these friends that have remained faithful to me in friendship. And I think that has kept me probably somewhat alert. I've been lucky though, that I am pretty good in. that, I have not had a lot of memory problems, and I'm grateful for that. Some health problems that I've

had to deal with, and I'm dealing with those as well, in many ways, not just the ordinary medical ways, but in Some might call me Woo.

Fantastic Guest!: I don't mind that. I like Woo. I think that helps my brain, and my brain helps my, dealing with my life right now. And I've known MJ. We've been friends forever. I knew her as a child, didn't know her well, but knew her family. And then, lucky me, I got to be with her when she went to school, close to where I was, and we became very good friends, and I think very mutual friends, where nobody is in charge.

Fantastic Guest!: We're both, we're very equal, and [00:03:00] mutual. We're both in

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: charge, right? Yeah. I think that's one of the reasons I'm excited to have you on the podcast. In my first season, Episodes 3 and 4 look at mental wellness across the lifespan. And in my podcast, I always start by asking my guests, For you, define what mental wellness is at this point in your life.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How do you define mental wellness? Probably a concept that wasn't even something you thought about necessarily when you were in your 20s or 30s or 40s. But now as someone in their 90s, how do you define mental wellness? What does it mean?

Fantastic Guest!: For me, the fact that I can still be in other people's lives, and I can really distract myself in listening and in caring for other people, which starts with my family.

Fantastic Guest!: My grandkids and my kids. I think one of the secrets of growing old and not getting depressed, and I've been [00:04:00] depressed a couple times after babies and things like that, postpartum depression. I knew that I couldn't get out of it myself, that I needed help from other people and from the people around me, and so I learned early on to be relief.

Fantastic Guest!: up front and say how I really felt and not just how I wanted to feel. And I think that has helped me to remain pretty healthy in my attitude about mental illness and mental health. Now I don't think everybody has that ability because your DNA has a lot to do with that. Your ability to be positive and to care about people and have the energy to do that.

Fantastic Guest!: So I think in a way I've been really lucky that kind of a gift in my life. But

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: part of the gift I hear you saying is you have the gift of being honest with yourself. That when you define mental wellness, what you're saying is, I try to be honest with what my mental state is. And I think that is And talk about it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And

Fantastic Guest!: talk about it. And get it out. And not let [00:05:00] it go inside and become resentment and depression. I get it out. And sometimes I think that's scary for people because I'm very direct and I want to deal with it. I don't want to bury it, so for me that has worked. Now, you may, you might have to ask other people whether it's worked for them when they're on the other end of that.

Fantastic Guest!: Because I tend to get to the point right away without games. And I like that about myself, but I'm not sure everybody does, but it's what, it's who I am. But

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: if we're focusing on mental wellness, that's how do we keep our mind in a good state? How do we keep our mind in a pretty enjoyable, peaceful state?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think it's really fascinating. I would say you were a trailblazer to decades ago, be able to admit to yourself after a child, I'm depressed, especially that's a conversation that we talk about now, but not 60 years

Fantastic Guest!: ago. But I also think one of the things that follows up on that is that I had the ability [00:06:00] to get help, and I think that's another huge thing in mental health, is that when you need help, and you need to sort things out, and you need some objectivity in your life, that you get help.

Fantastic Guest!: And I have done that professionally with help, but also with friends. I have many people that act as almost therapists for me. That I don't have to pay, because they care about me. I care about them. And there's a lot of mutuality there and that works for me.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So it's really friends where you have deep relationships where you're known and they know you.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Intimacy, I call it. You can share your opinions, your emotions and your values with each other. And that's sustaining. That's helped your mental health.

Fantastic Guest!: It's mutuality though too. I think I would add that or maybe put that before intimacy because I don't think intimacy always has to be there. But mutuality, I'm really lucky in that I recognize that in people and I know who I [00:07:00] have it with.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Like when your mind, when your mental health is in a good place at your age, what's it like? What's it like to feel mentally pretty good on a good day?

Fantastic Guest!: It's great. I don't have every day like that. Some days I'm a little bit down and I can't, but I also have the ability to distract myself.

Fantastic Guest!: I'm really a good distractor. And I can turn, on the news, which I don't always like to do because it's a lot of bad news. Talk about podcasts. I listen to podcasts a lot. If I can't sleep at night, and I don't always sleep real well now that I'm older. I can sleep beginning and then I wake up and I, and instead of just like watching television, I listen to podcasts or I meditate.

Fantastic Guest!: And that's very helpful. And I have the time to do it now that I don't work. I take care of myself. I take care of my house, but I take care of my mind. I think too. And I do that in getting out of myself and into other people and into other ideas that caused me to think about something other than [00:08:00] myself.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think that's so healthy. On those days when you feel down, and you know you should get out of yourself, how do you make yourself get out

Fantastic Guest!: of yourself? I do force myself. I push myself. Sometimes I don't even feel like going out and watering. And if I push myself to do that, because my mobility is not there.

Fantastic Guest!: As good as I wish it were. I forced myself to go out, turn on the water, get the sprinkler going, and then I'm very proud of myself because I forced myself and pushed myself. And so I find that, somebody calls and says, let's go out to lunch and you don't, you're a little bit down or you're tired or something.

Fantastic Guest!: My impulse is to say no, but then I say no. I get more from this if I push myself a little bit. So I spend a good amount of time. Like I went to a concert a couple weeks ago. I didn't feel like really going to that concert. My concert days I felt were over. Had the best time in the world going to that concert.

Fantastic Guest!: Getting out of myself and hearing music that I knew all the [00:09:00] words to and could sing along with. And I pushed myself to do that. My impulse was to not do it and to just stay at home and have a quiet evening. It was just unbelievably miraculous, and how I looked up to that for two months before I went, and I'm still looking at it and thinking what a great experience it was.

Fantastic Guest!: Uplifting, and it just did my heart good. So I know to do that. I know what to do that brings me up and out. But I also know that I've always been a strong and positive thinking person. And that's a gift. Not everybody has that ability. I cherish that and I'm grateful for it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What's the conversation like in your head when you push yourself?

Fantastic Guest!: It's conflicted. It's you'd be more comfortable at home and not forcing yourself to get your walker out and get yourself showered and ready to go. But then I know the results of that. I've done it enough now in these last 10 years that I know I'm going to feel better afterward.

Fantastic Guest!: And sometimes [00:10:00] I don't do it. Sometimes I give in and just stay home and say, no, I don't feel like doing that. But most of the time I do push myself. And I, it feels good to me. I want to push it myself. It doesn't feel quite as good because I'm forcing myself to be something that I don't really feel at the time.

Fantastic Guest!: But when I do it, I know that it's going to make me feel better in the long run.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So it's really this battle between your feelings of, I don't want to go and the fact that, if you do go. It will give something back to you that makes your mental state better.

Fantastic Guest!: Mostly always. Sometimes it doesn't work that way.

Fantastic Guest!: Sometimes it isn't much fun. And it's too much work. And then I realized, this is going to happen once in a

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: while. Do you learn from that? Oh, that is too much, but that isn't, or is it just random and you never know?

Fantastic Guest!: I don't think I analyze it that deep. I think mostly what I do is It's who I am, and it isn't even that hard to force [00:11:00] myself or to push myself.

Fantastic Guest!: And I think I really am grateful for that. My life in the beginning was quite sad. I had a brother that was killed in an automobile accident. My mom died when I was 12. My father was an alcoholic. And I learned at a very early age that there was strength in me, that I could survive those things, and they didn't make me crumble.

Fantastic Guest!: So I started out practicing abusing my power of positive thinking, knowing that sometimes I had to push myself. And I think I, in a lot of ways I think I was able to convey that to my children too, and my grandchildren. Right now my grandchildren are such a joy in my life, because I don't have to worry about anything about them.

Fantastic Guest!: I just can love them and enjoy them. And I have some issues in my grandkids especially that take a lot of thinking and a lot of feeling and a lot of not knowing quite how, if I'm doing the right thing. But I'm not afraid of that and I'm not afraid of acting out and even making mistakes in [00:12:00] it.

Fantastic Guest!: And I don't know, I don't exactly know why because as I'm aging I'm probably not as good as I was in the beginning. I have some more wisdom maybe. I think that the fact that I can Not be responsible for how my kids turn out, and that's another whole issue. We do the best we can for what we're given, and we don't, it's wasting time to just feel guilty over something that, an obstacle in your kid's life that you think maybe you could have done differently and they wouldn't have had it.

Fantastic Guest!: Probably not. It was gonna happen, and it's how you deal with it, and how you balance it in your life, and learn about it. But

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: that's really a part of aging, isn't it? Where you Now look back and you have to come to peace. With choices that were made. Some that you got to make yourself others that you had no control over.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What I hear you saying is I really have let that go. Everybody did the best they could, even if they didn't do a good job. It is what it is. And

Fantastic Guest!: I can't do anything about it now. Yeah.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Some people [00:13:00] find themselves ruminating over that kind of thing where, they might have a child who is an alcoholic or one with a terrible marriage and they the pain of that.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: is a terrible thing as a mother

Fantastic Guest!: to care. It overcomes them yeah.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How do you let those regrets go? Of just, may not be with your children, it may be what you had at work or another place in your life, but I just think it's normal to look back and regret, but it's not healthy to hold on, and, or you've learned how to let it go.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How do you do that?

Fantastic Guest!: I think what I said earlier is that I've become interested and involved in other people's lives. That helps an awful lot. When I've needed professional help, I've had enough means and enough guts to do it. And to get another version of what I'm living and some objectivity to it, I try not to let it get me down.

Fantastic Guest!: I don't have a lot of regrets. I have things that I wish I had a choice of, the path not taken. There are a couple things that I wish I had done, but I don't ruminate over that [00:14:00] at all. I just figure I've made up for it in other ways, and almost ways that were better. I didn't get to go to college.

Fantastic Guest!: I had to go to work right away, and nobody, I didn't have any money to do that, and nobody encouraged me. A lot of points in my life, I took classes outside. I almost think that was better. I chose all the things that I wanted to learn. And I was, it was a wonderful thing. And I made that into a really positive thing.

Fantastic Guest!: The fact that I didn't have a degree. And I had people along in my life who saw things in me that I really didn't need a degree for, that I could do. I keep thinking, yeah, I didn't do that, but I did this, and this might have been even better. So I guess that's what I mean when I say I have the

ability to really be positive and make Positive things out of things that could have maybe destroyed me in some way, or it's certainly maybe held me back I didn't waste time doing that

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: much.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's so wise. I mean it really is one of the ways that we cultivate mental health that we don't stay on something that [00:15:00] can't be changed.

Fantastic Guest!: You can get stuck and then you get stuck. And that's when, probably, when I did get stuck, and I didn't get stuck that much, then I went for professional health.

Fantastic Guest!: And I always seemed to get a person that I could resonate with, that I could connect, I'm a real connector, and even my doctors I need to connect to in some way. I think I would rather Go to a doctor that I connected with. I would be able to heal better with the person I was connecting with than if I'd gone professionally to somebody that was really good medically in that particular area.

Fantastic Guest!: And I really believe that. I go to some kind of nerdy people, of alternative kinds of medicine, and I feel the healing process going on with that. And they help my brain to deal with the pain that I might feel. And I think that's a wonderful thing to think that even though you're falling apart, you don't completely fall apart because you have that ability to say, hey, this is doing something to my brain.

Fantastic Guest!: It's helping me to deal with the [00:16:00] fact that I am in pain. But if I distract myself and I do things and push myself to do things that sometimes I don't always feel like doing, it's a form of healing. So

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: one of the concepts at this age is from Erickson's lifespan development of that you wrestle with.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Integrity and despair. And that's what you're saying. I'm trying to live into this as fully as I can. As our body ages, it's never pretty. Nobody gets healthier when they're 92. I'm really interested in like, how do you know when It's time to give up driving, or it's time to get a walker. Those are really hard things that can make people despair, because nobody wants to give up driving, nobody wants to use a walker, but if they're going to

stay in sync with their life and in what is true, they know that they have to say no to this.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How have

Fantastic Guest!: you been able to do that? I don't know exactly how I've done it, but I think part of it is [00:17:00] that I look at other people that are going through the same things that I am, and I watch how they fight, and it makes life harder for their children, because they don't do the things that will make them safer.

Fantastic Guest!: Giving up driving is the hardest thing. One of the hardest things I've ever done. My independence just, it's so tied up with your independence and yet I knew that I didn't want my kids to say, to have to talk me into or worry about me driving at night or hurting somebody else besides myself.

Fantastic Guest!: So I could, I was able to do that. And then I was very proud of myself. It's like pushing myself to do other things. I thought, this is a good thing. I've taken some pressure off of my kids.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: It's that same idea of Getting outside of yourself. I went through this with both my parents, giving up driving, it's such a loss of freedom.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: But then what you're saying is you thought about other people, particularly your children who worried about you and would have to clean up the mess. If you were [00:18:00] driving and something happened, it's that same value of

Fantastic Guest!: yours. And seeing my other friends. Not maybe be able to do that and being proud of myself that I could do it, that I could say, no, I'm not going to drive anymore.

Fantastic Guest!: I'm going to use the walker. My, I have a, my best friend won't use a walker or a cane and she's fallen four times. One of these times she's going to break her hip or do something which could end up to be, a fatal kind of thing. I don't want to do that. And somebody would say you're giving up.

Fantastic Guest!: You're using the walker. I feel more secure and I feel safer. And I live alone and I'm going to do that. I don't know what that is. You tell me,

you're more of a professional than I am. How would, I don't, how would you, I see

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: that as integrity. I think it's a form of integrity of this is what my body needs.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Function well, it needs a walker. People zip around on walkers much better than without a walker And that's what I think is really the same thing with driving is that it's a personal loss of freedom But it's a step into integrity. I think that's why [00:19:00] you felt so proud of yourself It was the right thing to do, but it's also heartbreaking.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yeah,

Fantastic Guest!: it's also heartbreaking hard You know to do it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What role do your friends who are your age

Fantastic Guest!: have in your life? For example, a couple weeks ago, an 88 year old, a 92 year old, a 91 year old, and a 90 year old, we got together for lunch, and we spent four hours together. It was therapy. We talked about the aging, and we're all different, in different stages of it.

Fantastic Guest!: And we Listen to each other, and we're going to do it again, and again, not every week would be too much to do it. But that kind of thing is very appealing to me, and it's been appealing to me most of my life. Even from the beginning, when I was going through things as a child, I had the guts and the strength.

Fantastic Guest!: to talk to people about what I was feeling and that's what this was. And, I don't think very many people do that or even have [00:20:00] the friends that they could do that with. And I'm lucky that way. But I also think I foster that. I'm the one that. That brings that together because that's important to me and I know I grow from that and that I can live better and solve my anxiety when I get it and if I get it, that's a way for me to deal with myself.

Fantastic Guest!: It's a lot of selfish things in that too. And the fact that I have those kind of friends is really so helpful to me. I mean it really is. Now those friends alone might not do that. I foster that and that I can. It's one

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: of your gifts. It's really creating community. It's my strength. And it's interesting cause it's really creating community, which I think you've done your whole life, but you said it's like therapy.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And I often think as someone who's a therapist, one of the reasons we have a lot of therapy right now is that we don't create enough community where people can speak honestly about what they're feeling to each other and then really get support from each other. And that's a beautiful example of [00:21:00] three people who you love dearly.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Spending four hours. That must have just been incredible for your heart, your soul, your mind. I'm sure it carried you for weeks after. And then you're all learning from each other just like we did when we had little babies, right? Young mothers all learn from each other. It's a beautiful thing to do that at this stage in your life as well.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yeah, you mentioned earlier that you meditate. I want you to talk about that. I don't think people always think about meditating as one ages.

Fantastic Guest!: It's hard for me to meditate. I have to really work at clearing my mind, but I'm getting better at that. And the podcast helped me with that too. I have a couple like you and a few other people that I really listened to and value.

Fantastic Guest!: If I try to meditate for a while and I don't meditate for a long time. If I meditate for 20 minutes to a half hour and quietly clear my mind, that's enough. I don't need a lot. What does it do for you? It takes away any anxiety. If I'm worried about something, if I got a medical procedure to do or something like that and I get a little [00:22:00] anxious about it, if I can do that, again I think it's the fact that I can distract myself.

Fantastic Guest!: I don't know that everybody can do that. I think to survive when I was younger I had to do that to distract. The day my mom was buried My friends came to the funeral, and I, to this day, really, my mom's death wrecked all funerals for me. I hate funerals. My friends were going to go to a movie.

Fantastic Guest!: There were three of them. I asked my aunt, who I was living with at the time, if I could go to this movie. And she said I don't think that's appropriate on the day your mom is being, this is her funeral day. And my dad

was there. My dad, had a lot of faults, but he said, no, he said, I think you should go.

Fantastic Guest!: And he said, you go and go to that movie. And that was one of the best things. And it taught me that I could get into this movie and forget. And that's a form of mind work. I think being able to do that. So I know that works for me and I know that I can get myself distracted and free myself up and it [00:23:00] works.

Fantastic Guest!: You

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: have this beautiful balance of meeting things. Head on, directly, and knowing when to distract without avoiding. It's avoidance that can get people in real

Fantastic Guest!: denial. It's not denial. It's Hey,

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: my mind needs a break. Just if someone's working out in the yard really hard Oh, I think I'll sit down and have some lemonade, give my body a break.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You have learned when your mind needs a break. from something that's stressful, anxiety provoking, heartbreaking, and you found these ways to do it. And

Fantastic Guest!: even now, as I age, and I, my kids are great, and my kids visit a lot, if I get too worn out or too stimulated, I just go into my room and lay down and blank out, and I feel very comfortable doing that, and they feel comfortable with me doing it too, so that I don't get over stimulated.

Fantastic Guest!: And I've learned that. And I think probably I'm not an an ordinary meditator. I'm a more connector and, but I don't deny a thing. I deny, [00:24:00] I don't deny, I recognize, deal with it temporarily and then distract myself and it

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: works. No, I think, because what we're trying to do to cultivate mental health, is understand what our mind needs, which is different.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Some people need an hour of deep meditation. As a therapist, one of the hardest things I've had is to get people on board with meditation because it does more and we're all crappy at it. I think people think

we all have to be like the Dalai Lama. And I try to meditate at least six mornings a week. I still suck at it after all these years.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: But it's still helpful. I hear you saying that. And I just think it's great that you have taught yourself this and let yourself do it. Even though you're like, Oh, I'm not that great at it. It's still really helpful. You don't, it's not something anyone has to be great at and hats off to the people who are great at it because that ain't me, but I still am in the boat rowing.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: When you think about any wisdom you'd want to offer, What advice would you want to give [00:25:00] younger people when it comes to mental health? I know you're super close with your grandkids, they've taught you tons, you've taught them. What advice would you want to give young people when it comes to taking care of their mental health?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I

Fantastic Guest!: think probably that it's a simple thing of recognizing when you're stuck and getting help. And how you do that probably is pretty individual. But I think if you learn how to do that To not be afraid to bring those kind of negative things up. To not feel guilty about We all got them. And the more you can recognize that you got, these issues in your life and deal with them, the more healthy and happier you're gonna be.

Fantastic Guest!: Cause that's what life is. And you gotta get that balance in there and make sure that you have fun and that you exercise and that you eat well and, but that you deal. You deal with it. You don't repress it and let it come out in depression. Some people can't help that to varying degrees. I, a couple of people in my life that are really It's huge.

Fantastic Guest!: It [00:26:00] overtakes them. And they're getting help, and I don't know what would happen if they didn't have the wisdom to get the help. But, they're basically not very happy people. Part of that is their DNA, and that they just don't have the ability to do that. I would really encourage that. I think, I also think support groups are great.

Fantastic Guest!: It's practice to tell with a group of people that you feel understand you. And that's what my group, my little four group of, people that are my age, that's what we did. It was therapeutic. It just was. And I think it's also a

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: practice to listen to other people's story. Part of what you're saying is you've really cultivated the skill of listening.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So people

Fantastic Guest!: interest you. I Want to know about that part of people. And that's easy for me, to

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: do that. In some ways, I wonder if it's the secret sauce of why you've aged so well. Because if we really realize people are fascinating. It's all I do is I listen to people's life stories.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: No one is boring. [00:27:00] And you have done that just as you've moved through your life as long as I've known you. And it's paid off incredible rewards because now, on days that, you feel down or lonely, you have all these relationships you can reach out to. And also, you learn. As we get older, we're not out and about.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So you vicariously hear about their lives, and your grandkids lives, and your kids lives, and that's pretty great. You still stay really active in your mind, even though you might not be out and about as much. That's a pretty big secret sauce, I think. The other thing I want you just to talk about is just the role of love.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think you're an incredibly loving person. And just to talk a little bit about how that affects your mental health. I

Fantastic Guest!: think it does affect my mental health a lot. And I think I'm capable of receiving love and giving love. In most of my relationships, there's so much mutuality in them. And it isn't just me servicing or listening to them.

Fantastic Guest!: It's them [00:28:00] listening and coming back to me with suggestions of, how to make things different, how to balance my life. And I think that happened as a result of My unhappiness as a child, I got used to doing that, and it worked, and so I just implemented that into my life. And and now I feel like at this age, a lot of my people my age have died.

Fantastic Guest!: I'm living a long time, and never thought I'd live this long. And yet I have behind me people like you in my life, who've been there for me all along. You could be my granddaughter. It isn't like that. It isn't like I'm just there for you. You are there for me and we exchange and love each other.

Fantastic Guest!: And that love is tremendously powerful in your life.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think it's the best medicine going and it's free, but it is what you said. It needs to be rooted in mutuality. And that is once we, I think, really get interested in one [00:29:00] another. It just happens, because people are really interesting. Even people we don't agree with are interesting.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: To sit and listen to their perspective, I think, is really helpful and life giving.

Fantastic Guest!: I also think that whole thing of people needing you, it can get exhausting. And in my life too, I try to be there for the people that really need me, but if they aren't able to give me back something, I limit that relationship.

Fantastic Guest!: I don't stay in it just to get sucked dry. I get out of it. I don't, probably that's not the best thing in the world, but it's for me the best thing in the world because I could get I have too many people in my life that just draw from me and I don't receive. And most of my relationships at this age are those kind of relationships that it's equal and mutual.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What that is, is a self awareness. You may have had more energy for that 30 years ago, but it's an update saying no different than the car. I can't put too much of my energy into relationships that aren't [00:30:00] mutual because as we age, we don't have as much energy. That's not a failure. That's a fact.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: It's just the way life unfolds. There's nobody with more energy at 92 than at 22. It's just not possible. This has been. Everything I thought it would be. I think one of the things that when I called you, I said, Hey, Marianne, would you like to be on my podcast? And you immediately said yes. And I thought, wow, that's probably one of the secrets of you aging in a way that is something that many of

Fantastic Guest!: us look up to.

Fantastic Guest!: But that says something about you too, that I wasn't afraid. I'd never done this before. I didn't know how I'd be able to do it if I'd be able to do it. But I trusted in you that you would Have the ability to bring out what you wanted to learn from me or whatever you Expected from the podcast and see that's what I have in my life Yeah And I celebrate that every day that you and I are very different and age wise and all kinds of ways But we love each other and we respect each other and we listen to each [00:31:00] other very carefully I

always want to listen to you and learn from you And I feel that way from you too.

Fantastic Guest!: I feel like you feel that way about me. Absolutely. It's

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: just, it's a wonderful relationship. It's a beautiful and I feel like you've been a teacher for me in many stages of my life. I think you're the, one of the main role models, probably along with my parents of aging is a skill. If people don't age well by accident.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: They age well intentionally. Some of it's lock DNA. If you get cancer or don't get cancer, but I do think our mental health plays a much bigger role.

Fantastic Guest!: I think we have much more control over it. Some of us, not all of us, like you said, but I find that. And I find when I do exert that control that I do have over that, it

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: works.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thank you for joining me today. This was great.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Loved it. Loved it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And I loved it too.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Here are my inner challenge insights.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Number one, you heard it here first. Sometimes, WooHoo does help our mental [00:32:00] wellness. So give meditation a try. Research tells us 5 to 13 minutes can be very beneficial, and that bringing our mind back to our meditation object, such as our breath, is what really helps our brain change. Wow, I guess I don't really suck at meditation.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Number two, mental wellness is a team sport. Find your team, friends and family who desire mutual relationships. You don't need a team of thousands, but curiosity of who other people are be your inspiration and mutuality your game plan.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number three, mental wellness does not just happen. Push yourself to do life giving things that lift your spirit. Water

your flowers, lunch with your friends, go to a concert, and get to know your family members in ways that are firm who they are. This is Ageless Advice.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Number [00:33:00] four. Integrity is living into the life stage we are currently in. Yes, doing it in an honest way. Each life stage has its gains and losses. We put our kids first during the parenting years. We ask the question, Who am I now in our 60s? And we do the hard work of accepting and working with our own limitations in old age. This type of integrity is for our own well being, as a well being of those we love the most. It makes me wonder if the opposite of integrity in our later years is not dishonesty, but stubbornness.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number five, a childhood full of loss can unfold into an adulthood full of love, relationship, and joy. Let me say this in an updated way. We are not chained to our trauma. So let's strive to be brave and [00:34:00] recognize, deal, connect, and grow from that which has hurt us. And don't forget Mary Ann's advice. Appropriate doses of distraction can lift our hearts and rest our minds.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And insight number six, make sure you send this podcast to those who you think would benefit from hearing from such life wisdom. Hey, Abby, Nick, Madhura and Kit, now is the time in your early 30s to prioritize Mary Ann's wisdom.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thanks for listening. And as we move into a new year, let's really treasure our family and friends. This is our Inner Challenge.

[00:35:00]