

Ep. 62 Mental Wellness: Retirement & The Power of Letting Go!

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:00:00] Welcome to the podcast today. I am back from five back-to-back days of filming the Inner Challenge Masterclass in the studio. I am incredibly excited about this project that I hope will debut this summer. If you have an organization that you think will benefit from the Inner Challenge Masterclass, please reach out to me mj@mjmurrayvachon.com. This segues into today's topic, which I probably need to think a little bit more about: retirement.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: As I've explored in previous episodes, one of the most profound and enduring questions we face is Who Am I? Joining me today is a guest who brings a wealth of experience, having recently retired after an illustrious 50-year career in TV and radio. As a clinician I've guided numerous clients through the life stage that cultural anthropologist, Mary Catherine Bateson, named Adulthood 2. Adulthood 2 encapsulates those years [00:01:00] where skills are finally honed, familial responsibilities may decrease, health is good, and many individuals find themselves stepping away from traditional work commitments and roles. Those roles have often been the primary way of answering the question, Who Am I? While, there's no precise age for Adulthood 2 this phase typically starts around 55 and can stretch all the way into the eighties and even 90, depending on one's health and circumstances. Bateson says that the pivotal decision in this life stage is whether to remain actively engaged or withdraw. Prompting us to confront the fundamental question: can I harness the wisdom amassed over a lifetime to redefine Who Am I, now ?I'm immensely grateful to our guest for accepting my invitation today. I know that the insights he's going to share will not only be incredibly interesting but useful. Thank you for being on the podcast.

Guest: It's a pleasure to be here, MJ.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: This is how [00:02:00] retired this man is, I was walking into the library and I ran into him six hours ago. He'd been in my head of the list of people I wanted to have on the podcast and I said, Hey, do you want to do a podcast today? Make a long story short. Here we are. So, thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Guest: That much preparation, we've been preparing our whole lives for retirement.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's a beautiful perspective. I always start with the question. How do you define Mental Wellness?

Guest: I think that is being functional. Functional in your own life. Being happy with Who you are. Being happy with the world around you. Happiness is not always being ecstatic but it's more of a joy in life.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's great. I think what's important is if we have a definition for Mental Wellness, then we have a better idea of what we're striving to cultivate and to have more I'm in our life.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I'm interested in you sharing with us, how did you decide to retire? You're beyond 65, some people, their 65th birthday, they're done, but you're a little past your 65th birthday. Give us the [00:03:00] story of how you came to the decision of this is the right time for me to retire.

Guest: I haven't been retired that let's not even been a year yet. I'm not a pro at this retirement thing. It was just really coming down to the last couple of years thinking okay. If I put in so many more months at work, I get another pension. If I go to the maximum age for social security, Then I give them maximum social security benefits. Resources are important. Because the resources provide you with the opportunities in life, to do certain things, not all the things, take money. It sure does help.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think that's a really important place to start. Often when someone retires is really financially, when can I retire? What was that like to leave a profession that you have done for more than 50 years. To not go into work every day.

Guest: Sort of eased into it. MJ. I think it was about two months before I retired. I asked, how much vacation time do I have [00:04:00] coming? They were saying, You'll get paid for the unused vacation time. What if I don't want to get paid for this unused vacation time? But I want get out now. I just felt, Hey, this is time two months before. Oh, that's going to be tough. Those last two months. Just putting in the time because you have to prepare for retirement. We've got paperwork to do. You got to apply for the pension and social security. So knew I was going to retire in two months and so I said, okay. I'm going to take a vacation for, most of that time before my last day.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You have to practically prepare for retirement. Was there also an emotional or psychological preparation?

Guest: That's where I think the vacation came in. I went off to Southeast Asia for over a month and took a Road Scholar tour and saw parts of the world that I always wanted to see, but never had that vacation time to be able to do that. I think that was my preparation. [00:05:00] I was thinking, what wasn't I able to do during my career that I can do now with the time and resources and I have. Why not do all those things that I always wanted to do? That's what I'm trying to do. MJ. One of them is having a talk with you here today.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's awesome. So you go to Southeast Asia, really as a way to emotionally, psychologically, spiritually make this transition because it's a transition. It's not a moment.

Guest: That was a great place to go because Thailand and Laos, the Buddhist philosophy of life, is to share happiness of your life with others and that's how you reach a stage of happiness or, a special type of spirituality. Sharing your happiness with others and you get that feeling, Thailand's called the land of smiles because people are happy. They haven't been involved in wars and things like that over the years because they like to negotiate happiness. Let's not [00:06:00] fight about this. Let's figure this out. That was a good place to start a retirement. Then to be with people of my age and most of them were retired. They had this curiosity that they wanted to go all the way across the world.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Tell our listeners what Road Scholar is.

Guest: ROAD scholar is ROAD. Road scholar is a travel agency for people that are mostly retired. They give you a really good experience where you go into these little villages. You have dinners with families in the rural areas of Vietnam. In Thailand you're going to people's houses out in the country, that you would never be able to do on your own. And they give you classes on the bus. You're on this nice bus and you're in Laos today's so we're going to teach you how to speak certain things in Laos. And this is the things about the money and this is their culture, and this is what we're going to see today. It's educational. You can't do that on your [00:07:00] own, that was fabulous. Then meeting other people that had that curiosity, and sense of adventure.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I want to punctuate two things that I think are really amazing. One is you put yourself in a place right at the end of your work life that is as far removed from your work life as it could possibly be. You're on the other side of the world. But you also put yourself in a community with other people who are committed to learning. Wow what a way to kick off retirement!

Guest: Yeah. It really was great.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Did you miss your job?

Guest: No. Nothing against the people at work. Did come back then for 10 days before my official retirement. I basically cleaned up my stuff and sat in the office. Anybody have any questions of what I do so I can help you so you can do my job better. But nobody came up to me during those 10 days to say, oh yeah, How do you do this or that or whatever?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Again, that's another, insightful part about retirement. The [00:08:00] people that I've worked with. They have a lot of information. They have a deep desire to give it. But typically, the stories in my office is the people are working with don't want it not because they don't love them. Not because they don't value them, but because people like to do stuff their own way. Yeah. Yeah. That is a helpful tip. It's not personal? I don't know if I've ever worked with somebody as they've made this transition into retirement that they have not said that exact same really. Yeah. That they, there's very few people, they might get a call here or there, a week or two where's that file or do you know where the password is? But for the most part, they're all surprised that they want to download all this information and people are busy doing their own jobs.

Guest: I was fine if they didn't want it. But then we also had a party for my clients and things like that.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Okay, so you come home you retire. Did you think about this a year or two ahead of time as what would I do with all this time?

Guest: Eight [00:09:00] years ago. I decided to do a Camino pilgrimage. I saw the movie The Way, with Martin Sheen and said, I really want to do that. It was Thanksgiving time. I got out the movie The Way and I showed it to the whole family and my two oldest sons said, okay, dad, when are we doing this?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's great.

Guest: I think it took us almost two years to figure out a date with their education and work and everything else how to fit a month-long Camino across Spain into our schedules. And we did it.

Guest: We mapped it out, planned it and It was an amazing experience. An inspirational month. We made it across Spain. We overcame obstacles. We figured out how to come up with solutions. It was so inspirational to meet people from all over the world. That we're looking for something more in their life. A pilgrimage it's defined as a journey [00:10:00] to a sacred or special place. The bonding was great between the three of us. But then we bonded with people from around the world and you're sharing some of the most intimate experiences and dreams and wishes. It's an amazing thing to change my life. It made me appreciate to have such gratitude for my life. This sort of helped me into retirement. It made me let go of trying to control things. For a while I was a sales manager. I was a Director of Development and things like that. In management, you're trying to control things or controlling the people that work under you're controlling your clients, your controlling management up above you. The Camino provides. Life provides. God provides. Talk about Mental Wellness. I think that giving up control is a big step in mental health, at least for me, it was.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes. Talk about why giving [00:11:00] up control helps our mental health.

Guest: Because you can't control. You said to be functional and for you to work through life and with other people and yourself. And if you're going to do that best to do it without those expectations and trying to control things, because you're always going to be frustrated because you can't control all these things.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You go on the Camino and you have many insights besides having a fabulous time with your sons and people around the world. That is a very powerful lesson to walk away with because if eight years before you quit working, you began what I would call the spiritual practice of giving up control, which really makes us happier. I talk about Mental Wellness is being able to have a spirit that is light, a spirit that is happy. And so, you're practicing that. It seems what's hard in retirement, if you're a person who's used to being able to control and manage and direct people that must be [00:12:00] shocking for people once they don't have it.

Guest: It immediately became a way of life. Instead of giving up control, that's almost a negativity thing. It is being open to others, being open to situations, being open, to yourself being open to God, being open to nature and the world. Then you can have flexibility, adaptability. It's all good.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You don't even know this, but you're using the five words that Dan Siegel uses to help us stay in a river of being peaceful, alert and calm. Are the ability to be flexible and adaptive and coherent. Coherence is our inside and outside match and its flexibility and adaptiveness that help us get there. And then when we're there, we feel more energized and stable. You're flipping retirement on its head for me. It is really helpful I think having worked with some people and getting their closer myself to be doing inner work, years ahead of it. We would like everyone to be doing Inner work their whole life, but you go on the [00:13:00] Camino and that is an inner experience. In outer beauty with wonderful people. That really put you on this trajectory of looking at control differently. As we age, we don't have as much control as we do in the earlier part of our life.

Guest: I differ with that.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: See, I'm more in the fear-based stage of aging. You're ahead of me. So, tell me.

Guest: So far, this could change tomorrow, right? But then if you're not controlling, it don't worry about tomorrow. It's out of my control I'll adapt, if I've got that tool of adaptability. But for right now, health is good and time is available and the opportunities are there.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What are you doing with your time?

Guest: I do a good amount of traveling. My wife has some physical things and she can't travel and she tells me that she's just as happy at home with the dogs and the cat and everything else. I will go off and do a Camino every year. And then I volunteer. [00:14:00] Service, I found it in retirement is a great thing. I'll spend several weeks in Santiago de Compostela, passing out the certificates to people that have had finished the Camino. To meet 3000 people, I give them their Compostela and many of them are reduced to crying. That's a special experience of sharing knowing that they've also been transformed by this special pilgrimage experience.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's beautiful. In these years when your health is good you're so alive. You're one of the most alive people I've ever met.

Guest: I was going to say that about you.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Oh, thank you. Thank you. I hope to be that way. That's important to me. It's easy in our culture, to get all wrapped up in ourself. And you use the phrase of, service to others. How is that helpful to you?

Guest: So, the other thing I do on the Camino is I became a hospitaliar. A hospitalaro is a person in a [00:15:00] dormitorio, a dormitorio is a place where people stay on the Camino. You can stay there for free. They get volunteers like me. I welcomed them like at the holiday Inn. I tell him about how we run this dormitorio. I get everybody then to help make the meal. People want to help. And they cut up the vegetables and we just have fun doing it. They're singing songs. People from all over the world can't speak to each other, but they're singing songs, cutting up the tomatoes and the onions and things like that for dinner. I invite them to mass. No pressure or anything. I don't tell them that they'll see me up at the altar serving as deacon. As a priest, gives them the Spanish Pilgrim blessing. I give them an English Pilgrim blessing. I thrive on that. Because you get so much back in return. From they're sharing their emotions and that closeness. It's an inspirational thing.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What's , awesome about that and what really applies, what we're talking about is you keep dosing yourself with happiness. [00:16:00] to do that, it's medicinal. It's so easy, especially in our country at this time to be really negative. We have to intentionally find ways to be life-giving and serve others in ways that are joyful. You're in Spain. I'm wondering how you do it here.

Guest: First of all, I got to say that you think it's a dosing of happiness. There, there are people that are listening to this right now, and they're saying. Wait a minute. Working, 18-20, Hours a day for foreign people making meals and cleaning up, that's not happiness. That's hell yes. Why isn't he golfing? Yeah.

Guest: But doing it here, getting back to your question. Is still engaging with people. This morning, when I ran into you by happenstance, I was hiking with about 25 or 30 retired people and we hike four or five times a week. These are other retired people that all [00:17:00] seem pretty happy. Walking is great for happiness. Sharing with other people is a dose of happiness and we're all retired. That's why we're walking at 10 o'clock on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday morning.

Guest: Then there's other things after the first Camino. I felt this special calling of teaching a class. I started telling people about the Camino and they changed the subject cause they don't want to hear any more about the Camino. I apologize to the people that are listening to this this right now, but more about

the Camino, but I said, what am I going to do with this? I got to share this somehow. In church, this idea came with teaching a class about the Camino helping other people get to the Camino. I didn't know that there were hundreds of people in the South Bend area that wanted to do the Camino and they didn't know how, or they had some fears to do it. So, we did this class and been doing that for the past eight years. You did the Camino.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Came to the class and I have friends doing it in May and they were out walking the other [00:18:00] day and there was a woman sitting on the bench and she's going on the Camino. It is a community that has a lot of people who have gone on the Camino and you've been a big spark plug in that.

Guest: It's been joy to do that. This also then came full circle. I can teach a course on the Camino and hundreds of people, then go off and do this walk across Spain. Then maybe I can do something else with my life too. Was looking towards retirement. Several people said Tom. There's this new deacon formation class going on. Why don't you do it? I never thought about being a deacon in the Catholic church. But it starting up and there, people applying for it. So, I thought I'll give it a shot. I probably won't go all the way through it. It's going to be almost five years and its hard work. A real commitment. I thought I'll do it until, it doesn't work out. But I'll learn all these things about the faith That was of interest to me. It did strengthen my faith and I learned a lot and [00:19:00] somehow God got me through it. I am now an ordained deacon. Serving others. Yes. Which coincidentally, started about the same time of retirement. I'm in a deacon responsible assigned to a parish and that's a great blessing.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Part of what you're really demonstrating is this capacity to turn inward and listen to yourself.

Guest: Wow. Do you always good at

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: you might not be thinking you're doing that. I have drawn as a therapist, a connection between the Empty Nest stage and retirement. That people have more space when their last child is out of the house, whether it's college or work or whatever. If they have the capacity to listen to themselves, there's an energy that comes back that gets constellated for most people. But most people might hear, maybe I should do a class and then

go, who would come? Why would I do a class? Nobody come. What was your internal reaction after think I [00:20:00] should do a class.

Guest: It goes back to that I don't have control. When I went to Forever Learning and I said, Hey, what about this class in my mind before I heard her answer. I figured I'll just give it a shot and I'm not controlling this. If it works out great. If not, then I'm going to come up with some other ideas. Then she says, oh, I think that'd be great. At the same time a newspaper reporter came to me and said, Hey, I heard you do this Camino maybe we'll do a story and lo and behold, he does full-page story on my sons and I doing the Camino and that Camino class got filled up and we had to take a waiting list.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Wow. Would you say that idea of, Giving up control gives you so much more freedom to try new things.

Guest: Yeah, for sure. Think your text message today says you want to do a podcast and in half an hour?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I just saw you and I had the energy, I figured you're a grown person. You can say I actually thought like that is the spirit of retirement. I did an episode with a 92-year-old [00:21:00] woman and I said, do you want to be on my podcast? And she said, I was just so shocked that she said yes And she was like, Hey, I'm 92, I should be saying yes to everything I can.

Guest: I think that's is a real good summary of why not say yes, as long as you have the time, sometimes you have to, work things out. Get them scheduled and so forth. I'm not one to sit down and watch TV and, read long books or things like that. I like doing things and being with people.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You're a year out almost of retirement?

Guest: Yeah.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Does it feel different now than eight, 10 months ago?

Guest: No, it's all good. On the internet, you can find these experts. I think it was a Ted Talk Said the four stages of retirement. The first one is like the vacation. I think if I remember right stage two, Is big depression because all of a sudden the vacation stage is over . you're not working and you feel like you're

not contributing to anything. I don't want to [00:22:00] get myself there. So, I'm going to stay busy As a fourth stage I remember is being comfortable with the first three stages and finally figuring everything works out. I don't know, I'm either there in stage one or I somehow went past. At one passed did jail. Didn't go to jail and went over to the whole thing of feeling fine with the way that it all worked out.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Maybe you front-loaded it. I've had people come to therapy because they were in that depressed state. Much of their identity was work, so when they left work, they didn't feel like they had an identity. They're work in therapy really wasn't to get over this depression, it was to redefine themselves without that noun. They had to find out Who Am I now that I'm not this noun? They were also people who hadn't done a lot of self-reflection and part of what you're talking about is that the Camino facilitated that in you.

Guest: That does two [00:23:00] things. You can do a Camino at home. Walking is great therapy. It gets the endorphins going and that's all positive and it gives you time for reflection. Your happier and more content feel more adaptable you think things through while walking. You can meet other people like the hiking group.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What's been the most surprising part of retirement for you.

Guest: Great question. Because I'm open to whatever happens. I'm always looking for surprises. I just went back to the Philippines and Thailand a couple months ago. I didn't think I was going to do that, but I just said, oh, I got some time, I'll. Go do that. Acting spur of the moment . You're open to surprises, then there's nothing that really surprises you.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Again, it's just another example. To yourself. All of a sudden inside it's oh wait, I've got the time I could go back to Thailand and the Philippines. It's surprising. Because when we work, we have to plan things far out. [00:24:00] Part of what you're saying with retirement is there's more of an openness to listen to yourself and respond.

Guest: I hate to keep bringing up the Camino.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Oh, we love the Camino. We did an episode on the Camino.

Guest: We know somebody and 85-year-old lady is going to go in a few weeks to do her Camino again. On a real pilgrimage you travel without reservations. It's not all planned and then you've got some of the greatest surprises. Who you're going to meet, where are you going to be? Where you're going to walk. You don't even have to look at a map, you just follow the arrows. There are arrows in life too. I like the arrow today was in the library that says, oh, there's MJ. Oh, she wants to do a podcast. Okay. So, follow that arrow and following those arrows in life and having that versatility and being open.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: How do you listen to yourself? What helps you?

Guest: That's a good question. Is a good thing. Like that program you did Inner Challenge. Is this good for me? Is this good for [00:25:00] others? You got to listen to yourself, it's at Inner Challenge that you're the expert.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: The one example you gave, I think you were sitting in church and said, maybe I should do a class. Is that typically like when you're in church or when you're walking or showering. For me, it's swimming. When I swim I listen to myself differently than other times.

Guest: Right now, at this moment, having a conversation with you because I'm focused on you, I'm focused on the conversation. So, I'm not thinking about, okay, what am I going to do later? Again, I can't control those things. Worry about that later. Be focused in the moment. Be in the moment. With that type of a focus. I think that it all works out. There are other moments too, Listen to myself. I think the more inspirational ideas for my homilies, with the help of the Holy Spirit is when I wake up in the morning, I wake up and the first thing I'm thinking, oh, I got to put that into the homily. And baking all night. That's a great moment. Or a walking. Or jogging. I like to jog [00:26:00] too. Those are good moments, that to be reflective and listen to myself.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Do you have other things you hope to do in the next number of years in retirement.

Guest: I don't want to control that. That's the thing is I'm open to the different opportunities. I hope I have a good amount of time to, to still have those opportunities. And so why not be open to them every day as long as I can.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Wow. I can really realize I'm not in retirement because what you're really putting into words for not just me, but I think our

listeners is that retirement really is about being open. I guess hard for me to imagine cause I'm still working and needing to plan. But I love the idea of not being bound by commitments, where I would have to plan ahead. I'll go on vacation here. I'll go see my children at this time. Being in my [00:27:00] house and going, oh, I'd love to go see my daughter I'm out of here. That's a new internal experience for me. I've thought about retirement, I've helped with, people think about theirs and, figure out how to let go of an identity of work. But that I've not ever thought of that openness. I think the first 50 years of life are about accumulating. And the next part of life is about letting go. And it's even letting go of a schedule. Where you have enough openness that ideas can come in that you wouldn't expect. They surprise you. But what you said is it's not surprising because you're really trying to live in this way of being open.

Guest: It's a gradual letting go. It's not like you're hanging onto a cliff and then all of a sudden you let go. That's not letting go. It's a gradual beautiful, natural way. But that lack of planning and acting with more spontaneity, it drives my wife a little crazy. Yeah, Tom, are you going [00:28:00] to go to the grocery store on Thursday or Friday this week? Do you need something? She maybe I do, but what are you going to go? And is it on the calendar when you're going to go? That can be upsetting to other people. Sometimes when they're looking for more definitive plans. I just love spontaneity so much.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Did you love it before retirement, but you had to juggle life so you didn't have as much openness for it?

Guest: Very good. Yeah, you're good. That's exactly it. I think I wanted this spontaneity and I resisted, oh, got to have a meeting here, got to have a meeting there, another meeting there, and it's always the Wednesday, three o'clock meeting or whatever. It takes spontaneity out of life. I didn't like that. I'm glad that is over.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's one of my hopes for people in retirement. Life is complicated and asks a lot of all of us. Part of what life asks of us is not the things [00:29:00] we are naturally good at or naturally appreciate. So, I like in retirement, if people are able to get more to their natural state and part of what you're saying is spontaneity. I worked with a woman who had a really demanding job and one thing she really loved was the predictability of it. What she wanted in retirement was to be able to have some predictability, because that felt really good to her. But she didn't know how to have it unless it was imposed on her by higher ups. She, came up with this beautiful week of predictable experiences that were painting and walking and lovely things. In retirement, when people answer, the question, Who Am I, my hope is that

people can get back in touch with parts of themselves that they might've had to let go because of career or family responsibilities.

Guest: There's some type of a routine and schedule with the, having some type of spontaneity connected to [00:30:00] that to make that an adventure in life. That's the thing I think is happening an adventure with life, instead of a routine. Cause it's the routines that I think make us feel safe and comfortable. But then every day is like every day. Being open to the adventure of life.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I want to punctuate how often you've talked about relationship in this conversation. Because I think the people I know who have aged the best and who have the best vitality, whether they're 85 or 93, Are people who can really enter a relationship, not just with people who are close to them. But with a stranger, they meet. I really admire that about you, that you really have such a heart for relationships. You're continuing to make sure that's part of your life. I am sure that there are people who work in churches who say, oh, I've got to go to the back of the church and talk to whoever. But you are a person who sees the specialness in [00:31:00] those relationships. Even if it's a five-minute conversation. And that must be very fueling for you in a good way.

Guest: MJ, one of the most fueling things with talking about relationships is to see my kids cherishing their relationships and people and talking to strangers. Cause that's going to go on after I'm gone. Hopefully that'll go on to their children, my grandchildren ,and that's, really fulfilling.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Is that intentional in you? Or can you just not help it?

Guest: I can't help it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I work with a good number of people are older and I really try to encourage them to keep cultivating relationships because Mental Wellness is my thing and relationships are really pivotal. That ability to connect with others, is very important for this stage of life,. People have to keep pushing themselves. You don't have to, because it's a bit like eye color in your family. It goes down to the generations and you're fueled by connection. I really like to encourage all of us [00:32:00] who have people in our lives, who we love, who are in their seventies and eighties a 15-minute phone call goes a long way.

Guest: One of the things that I do as a deacon is visit the nursing homes. I think that's an important connection. It's so powerful to meet them and to know how much they appreciate a visit. They cheered up, just because of a visit. That's something that we can all do.

Guest: Also volunteering at a place that helps homeless people with a meal and those are special opportunities to connect with people. It's getting out of that comfort and looking for that spontaneity.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Mary Catherine Bateson, who I referred to in the opening, came up with this idea of Adulthood 2 because we live longer, people are very skilled. I always think that families are really pressed to the edge. Parents are working, the kids are in lots of activities. I often think It's those of us in our sixties and seventies, that communities need. For [00:33:00] us to step forward and to be on boards and organizations to help communities be able to function and run as they always have on lots of volunteer hours.

Guest: I didn't tell you that, I am on four boards and two of them are national boards. And for the past four years, I've coached the JV soccer team and I even get out there and play soccer with them. That's Great opportunity to see the life of such young people that are so dedicated, such hardworking. It makes one feel really alive. The young people that are just at the beginning of going into their adulthood.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: As we begin to wrap up, is there anything that you think, oh, I wish I would have said that.

Guest: We covered it all.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: This is really helpful to me because I'm in this stage of thinking about retiring and I appreciate all the things that you said, because I didn't anticipate that since this was a surprise podcast episode, since I ran [00:34:00] into you. I appreciate what I'm going to take from this podcast. Thank you so much.

Guest: Thank you for the opportunity.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Here are my Inner Challenge Insights.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number one.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: From my limited viewpoint, it seems that Americans are a bit grumpy at the moment. Sitting with my guests felt akin to understanding the Thai culture. Tom's retirement project: simply to be happy and useful, and I don't think anything will deter him. What an incredible example of seeking out what makes his heart sing, his mouth smile and his purpose aflame. While there are countless reasons to feel unhappy, today's guest has discovered the three or four things that bring him happiness and it's contagious.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number two.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Retirement challenges, our perceptions as life's culmination. Work and childrearing fade, leaving an emptiness. But what if it's a pilgrimage inward? [00:35:00] As we confront, we hear the clock ticking. Limited time. Worn out knees. Yet by engaging with our feelings of fear, uselessness and limited time, perhaps we can transform these emotions. We can seek joy, happiness relationships and adventure much like our guest today.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number three.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Perhaps you listen to this episode and you're angry. You might be thinking MJ, you haven't a clue nor does your guest. I retired and then I became ill, widowed, responsible for grandkids or financially unstable. This sucks. If that is your situation. I am really sorry. Dealing with this also demands a lot of letting go and grieving for what you had planned versus what actually happened.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: There's no easy way out when life throws us such unexpected curve [00:36:00] balls. I hope you do your inner work. As well as allow others to support you. None of us are meant to carry pain alone.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Insight number four.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Giving up control is not really giving up but rather opening up to new ways.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thanks for listening. Whether you're 70, 80, or 20, I hope you find a way to go to your Thailand today.