



**EP38:**

# A Higher Pursuit of Happiness...

## Less Searching, More Living

With Robert Holden, Ph.D.

Colette:

Hi there, and welcome to INSIDE THE WOONIVERSE, a podcast brought to you from the corner of Fringe and Main. I'm your host, Colette Baron-Reid. Joining us today is the most awesome human on the planet. It is British psychologist, author and broadcaster, Robert Holden PhD. Robert's innovative work in the field of psychology and spirituality has been featured literally everywhere on the Oprah Winfrey Show, Good Morning America, on PBS, on BBC etc cetera, et cetera, and so many more places. In addition to being a personal and professional coach, Robert is the founder of The Happiness Project and the author of 10 bestselling books. All of them were bestselling books, some of which include, Happiness How! Be Happy! One of my favorites, Holy Shift! And then Shift Happens! And now, which I'm so excited about, his new book, it's called Higher Purpose, and Robert is also one of the greatest teachers on the planet when it comes to one of the oldest self-awareness tools on Earth, the Enneagram, which we will dive into today too.

Robert, we know you give workshops and seminars all over the world, and we are thrilled that you are here with us today. It has been impossible to nail you down, but here you are. I'm so excited.

Robert:

And finally, I am Inside the Wooniverse.

Colette:

Inside the Wooniverse. Welcome, welcome.



Robert:

It's where I've always wanted to be.

Colette:

Yeah. Well, you live here. I know you live here anyway. So listen, let's go back way back in time to you when you were little, what was your childhood like? And were you always interested in psychology and the undercurrents as to why or how people behave the way they do? Tell me a little bit about how you grew up and how you actually landed here.

Robert:

Yeah, that's a lovely question. Well, I can give you a fun story that I shared actually in this book, Higher Purpose. It was, I don't remember doing this, but it is what my mom reminded me of often, which was that just before my sixth birthday, I was asked what it is that I most wanted for my birthday, and I said to her, "I'd like a briefcase."

Colette:

A briefcase?

Robert:

Yeah, a briefcase. And she said, "Why do you want a briefcase?" And I said, "Because I've got some very important work to do." And anybody who seemed to be going to work had a briefcase. So that's what I wanted at six years old, some sort of a briefcase to do, so that I could go to work and do this really important work. So I've always had that sense, Colette of I'm here for a reason. There is a purpose to all of this. It's a great big mystery. So I'm not exactly sure what my purpose is, but there's this sense I have some work to do. And that's been with me really from very, very early on. But then after that, I would have to say for me, I would say that the two big events of my life really in my childhood were all to do with my mom and dad.

So my mom had experienced a recurring bouts of depression all of her life. And this was the sort of depression that would happen in episodes. And so it would happen, it would arrive unannounced, and it could stay for a few days, a month or longer, and sometimes mom would have to go into a mental health institute or to get treatment. So this was very painful for all of us as a family. It's also very frightening because if me and my brother David, who was four years



younger than me, if we were making breakfast ahead of going to school and mom hadn't got out of bed yet, we were always wondering, Okay, is this a new depression? Is this just a bad day? Is this going to be a week? Is this a month? Is this longer? That experience of depression, I found very, very difficult to deal with.

I didn't understand why my mom was depressed. She was so cool. I mean, this was the thing about mum. I mean, he was amazing. I mean, she was incredibly beautiful. She was proposed to by Lords from different places in Europe. She was completely gorgeous. She was amazingly creative. She was great fun. But she did live with this shadow of depression all her life, and it really was very, very disconcerting. Then also around the age of 15, we realized my dad had been drinking. Now we didn't know that he had been drinking, but we really learned that he had actually had a drink problem for a long time, but there are so many social opportunities to drink, you just don't clock it.

And when we really found out that he'd been drinking and that he had a drink problem as such, that he was alcoholic by then, he really went downhill very quickly. And we discovered really from his psychiatrist that he had been drinking ever since his discharge from World War II. He had served in World War II. He had experienced some terrible things that none of us knew about. We only knew about them later. But yeah, dad lived homeless on and off for 10 years. So this is for me, between 15 and 25 now.

Colette:

Wow. So he wasn't with the family, he took off, is that what you're saying?

Robert:

Yeah, he took off. Yeah. Yeah. Mom asked him to stop drinking, and he agreed to, and then he started again, and then he stopped again. And then he started again. And it was it terrible. I mean, our family was just a train wreck, really. And this all happened in my teenage years. Well, it came to a head in my teenage years. So at that point, I started to ask those big questions like, Well, what is life all about? And what is happiness and what is success and what am I meant to be doing with my life? So in a sense, that's what really took me into wanting to study psychology and philosophy and just get some answers to some questions, Colette, because I was essentially bewildered and confused. And frankly, the last thing I wanted to do was just go and



get a job and behave normally when I hadn't experienced that in my own family. So I'd have to say that it was my parents' wounds that really were the catalyst for my journey and for getting me onto the spiritual path essentially.

Colette:

Isn't that interesting? You and I have quite a few things in common, but my parents both went through World War II and they never spoke about it, but you intuit that sense of there's something being hidden. There's something going on. My mom, my grandfather was killed in Dachau, so he was a French resistance person, but he was also Jewish. I didn't even find out about that till I was in my mid 20s. But I had all these dreams of these things that happened to my mom. And so in a similar way, because I also was interested in what made people tick and why the secrets were so available to someone like me, and when people don't say the truth about the world and when it's not safe to be who you are, et cetera, I also kind of dove in as a result of my parents, and they tried to protect us by not sharing anything about the war. That was the whole point. They came to Canada and they became somebody new.

Robert:

I think that's a great way of putting it, Colette, was that I think that's what was happening, certainly to my dad, was just that the best way to deal with the war was to try to leave it in the past.

Colette:

Repress it.

Robert:

Yeah, exactly. But I guess we know better now, and we know that you bring your past with you wherever you go.

Colette:

Yeah.



Robert:

So eventually, I think he ran out of almost psychic energy. It takes a lot to repress something, doesn't it?

Colette:

Oh, yeah. Oh, it sure does.

Robert:

Yeah.

Colette:

And alcohol does work in the very beginning, as you know, I'm in recovery 37 years almost now, being sober.

Robert:

Yeah, congratulations.

Colette:

So I know exactly how much energy it takes to stay sick, actually.

Robert:

Yes.

Colette:

So let's segue and talk a little bit about positive psychology, because this is such a big part of what you do. How does it differ for what we know as mainstream psychology?

Robert:

Okay. Well, I could tell you a little bit now about the Happiness Project. So with the Happiness Project, really, I'd have to go back to my training in psychology. So I trained really in psychology and sociology, psychotherapy counseling for six years. In that time, I had one lecture on happiness.



Colette:  
Wow.

Robert:  
Okay. Just one.

Colette:  
Just one?

Robert:  
Yeah. And I often think imagine if I'd missed it. I mean, students do miss lectures, so at least I got to the lecture on happiness, but it was only one. And actually in that lecture, happiness was dismissed as a pleasant emotion with no evolutionary value.

Colette:  
No?

Robert:  
Yeah.

Colette:  
No kidding?

Robert:  
Yeah.

Colette:  
A pleasant emotion that has no evolutionary value.

Robert:  
Yeah.



Colette:

Wow.

Robert:

So if you are happy, great. Enjoy it. But it really has no purpose and no meaning. And therefore, let's get back to the suffering, if you like.

Colette:

Pathologies, right?

Robert:

Yeah. Back to the pathologist.

Colette:

Let's stay to the pathology.

Robert:

Exactly. And of course, that's a very important part of the work. But the point is, I suppose, is that my curriculum had a lot of gaps in it. We didn't study happiness, we didn't study purpose, we didn't study love. We didn't study creativity. We didn't study inspiration, we didn't study anything, we didn't study meaning. We only essentially really looked at people's problems, which again, is incredibly important to do. But the focus was entirely on that. And essentially, I think the formula that I was given was, let's help everybody get over their problems and then they will be happy. So in other words, let's get through all of the unhappiness and then you can finally be happy. And what I discovered after a while, especially when I started to practice and I had a clinic on the National Health Service called Stress Busters.

Colette:

Oh, come on. Okay. Can I just throw something in there now?

Robert:

Yeah.



Colette:

I had a little company years and years and years ago called Stress Busters. I had-

Robert:

What?

Colette:

Yes. Yes. No kidding. I used to do massage on film sets, before I started doing readings I certified as an aromatherapist, and that was the name of my company. You had a company named Stress Busters. That's crazy.

Robert:

That's Amazing.

Colette:

Okay. Anyway, go on with yours.

Robert:

But Colette, it is a bit like that with you and me.

Colette:

Yeah.

Robert:

We do discover these things the more we talk. It's very interesting. Yeah. Well, essentially what I realized after a while is that actually that if you focus only on problems, firstly, there's no end to the problems. But also the way you look at these problems, you see them as obstacles in the way of something, as opposed to gateways towards something, some sort of growth. Essentially, everything gets pathologized. So everything becomes an illness, everything becomes a problem. And yet, actually, for example, with depression, it's when we meet depression, genuinely meet it with enough love, and we begin to somehow find a way to befriend our depression. That, that depression, the relationship changes, and now we can work





with our depression to help us live our life, rather than see it as something that's in the way of our life.

And I think what I learned after a while was that what I wanted to do was I wanted not to look at happiness after all of the problems have gone away. I actually wanted to look at happiness right in the middle of everything. I wanted to change the focus, and I wanted to see if I could help people understand something about happiness in the here and now, even though their life was a mess, even though their life was full of challenges and problems. And my sense was that actually the more we learn about what true happiness is, maybe that can help us to handle our unhappiness better. Okay, if that makes sense?

Colette:

Oh, yeah.

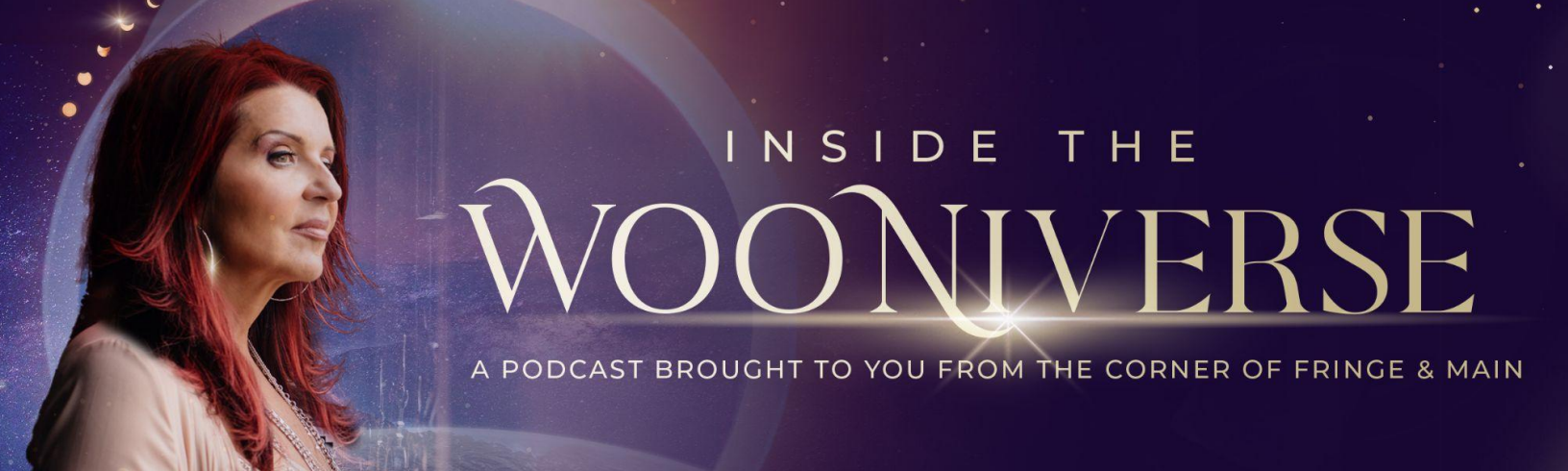
Robert:

That was the work. That was the work. And so what I did was I created an experiment, which was an eight week happiness program where I was going to take people through the eight week program and see if we could help them to be happier in spite of all the challenges of their life, in spite of all of the problems and the difficulties.

And we did this a few times. And then after a while, the BBC approached me, the science department approached me and asked if we could set up a documentary where we could focus on people going through the eight week program. And there would be two sets of scientists, independent groups that would measure the progress of our volunteers on the eight week program. And we had a set of scientists led by Professor Michael Argyle at Oxford University, and they were going to measure what's called subjective wellbeing, which is essentially just reflecting on how we feel about our life and how we are. But then we also had another set of scientists headed up by Professor Richie Davidson at Madison Wisconsin University, who was really doing the hard science and actually measuring brain function.

Colette:

Wow.



Robert:

On our volunteers as they went through the eight week program. So this was a very public showing, if you like. I mean, this was back in the '90s when here in the UK we only had four channels. So you had to watch something.

Colette:

You - I had to watch it.

Robert:

Yeah, exactly. You didn't have a choice. And obviously, I mean, look, the great news was that the scientists basically were able to show that what this program really was what was called a fast track to happiness. But part of the work was, and I want to emphasize this, was that part of the work was finding a way to work with our fears, our wounds, our difficulties, our challenges, and use them to live a more full and purposeful life. And I think that was part of the success of that project. That all happened before positive psychology was called positive psychology.

Colette:

Oh, I'm curious about that. I was like, wait a sec. I know the dates of the other one. Wait a minute now. Interesting.

Robert:

Yeah. So positive psychology kicked in really through the American Psychology Association, and around about 2000, I was doing this back in 1994.

Colette:

Yeah in the '90s.

Robert:

Yeah, that's right. '94, '95 was when we sort of began. So yes, in a sense, I was clearly part of a wave of psychologists that were saying, Look, we need to address our focus here. We need to balance ourselves out a bit here. We need to look at unhappiness in a new way, and we need to start looking at happiness and actually learning about it. And I do believe that happiness is a spiritual path, and that the more we learn about happiness, truly the more fulfilled we will be.



And so that was the work. And as you know, that's sort of how eventually we got to meet each other was I went on the Oprah Winfrey Show. And fortunately for me, Reid Tracy at Hay House was watching the show that day. And after that, I signed up with Hay House, and I've been a member of the Hay House family ever since.

Colette:

So did you actually redo this program during COVID because boy, oh boy. This could have been something, you were way ahead of your time. Because given the fact that everybody was in such a state from being exposed to so much sustained uncertainty, the Happiness Project would be a phenomenal thing for people to remember. Because I think what happens when we're given exposure to so much uncertainty, the need for certainty is so strong, but you can't make the world behave. You can't force it. So both and the resilience that can happen with this project of yours, and I've pretty much read all your books, so I know it always leads to the same place, which is to be in the world and not of it, and to live comfortably in both and in these two things. So did you notice a surge in book sales for this during COVID? Because it would've been very helpful.

Robert:

Yeah, I think whenever there's a recession, whenever there's great difficulty that we are facing, as you say, it's incredibly frightening, disorienting. It's very difficult for all of us. And I think initially we sort of panic and scramble around and we don't know what to do with ourselves. But after a while, I think what happens is we do start to question things and we do wonder, well, what is true happiness? What am I meant to do with my life? That sort of thing. And interestingly, often it's during a recession that we find that people's happiness levels interestingly start to go up. Now, this is paradoxical, but in times of great abundance, we often go crazy and we just piling up as many choices as possible and we chase after happiness faster.

Whereas in the recession, when we are actually asked to simplify our lives more, and instead of going out to dinner four times a week, we sit around the family dinner table and talk to each other and we simplify our life and we haven't got money to spend. So all of a sudden we're sort of throwing back on ourselves a bit. And it's often in a recession, I think that as painful as it is and as difficult it is, we remember what's real.



Colette:

See, I love that you said that because we can use the term recession and apply it to the COVID. Right?

Robert:

Yes.

Colette:

So when everybody was in lockdown, et cetera it's a recession, we recede from that heavy consumerism and that go, go, go. We have to slow down. We didn't have a choice. We were pinned in place. So yeah, I also noticed that even in my own life, I'm like, Okay, well what makes me really happy? And who can I genuinely help? And what is the purpose? And I started painting during this, I found that.

Robert:

There we go.

Colette:

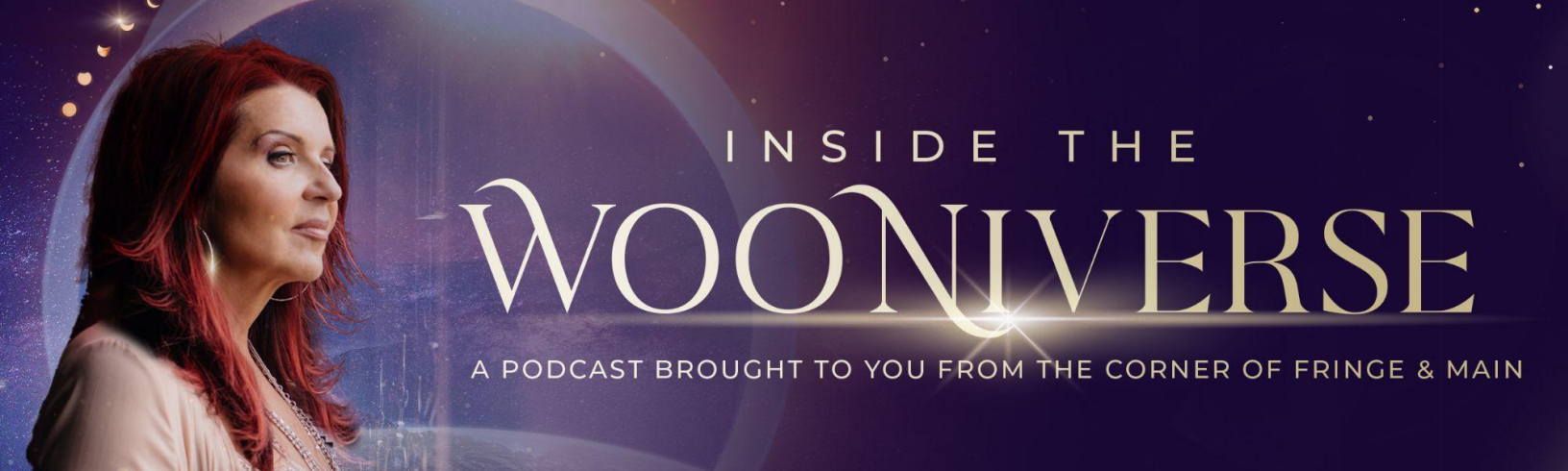
Got all this new art that I'm doing. If you pair it down like you said too, it's you pair it down. I actually reread one of your books during COVID because I found it so helpful because like you said, the spiritual path, you can't have happiness without spirit. And I'd like to just chat about that, about the concept of connection, of spiritual connection. Because I think the greatest suffering of the world is caused by spiritual disconnection.

Robert:

Yes.

Colette:

So can we chat a little bit about that too? And because your new book is the Higher Purpose speaks about that.



Robert:

Yeah, absolutely Colette. I mean, one link here would be that with the Happiness Project, I really feel the purpose of that project was to help people to stop searching for happiness and to start following their joy. And I think there's a world of difference between searching for happiness and following your joy. Searching for happiness immediately places happiness outside you. So now you have to go and search all over the place for it. And that's scary. Whereas following your joy, you are essentially responding to an impulse inside you. And now joy becomes your compass and joy becomes your guide and joy becomes something that helps you to connect to a higher power and to a greater purpose. Yeah, for sure. Colette, I am in no doubt that humanity has a wound and the wound is our sense of separateness.

Colette:

Yeah, that's what I think. That's the cause of all our trauma.

Robert:

It is, yeah. It's the cause of every trauma there is. We have a story that we've fallen from grace, so we think we're being kicked out of heaven. We have another story, which is that we are separate from nature, that we don't even really belong to nature. We say that we'll be stewards of nature, but we don't really believe we belong to nature. So we are separate from nature too. Then we look at each other and we feel separate from each other. And we have separate nationalities and separate cultures and separate races. And you can just see that this sense of separateness, which Albert Einstein called the optical delusion.

Colette:

The optical delusion, Yep.

Robert:

Yeah, because nobody's separate really. But it looks like we are. But that sense of separateness is the great trauma I think that we're all going through. And it is the cause of war. It is the cause of conflict. It is the cause of racism. It is the cause of everything that causes us suffering. And our great work is I think, to repair that optical delusion.



Colette:  
Totally.

Robert:  
That we experience for sure. And I think all of my work in the end has been about that, actually. I think that's where my mom's depression, when I really would sit with her and ask her about it. Because depression, by the way, I think is quite a lazy diagnosis. And when I would really ask my mom what it's about, it was loneliness.

Colette:  
For her.

Robert:  
She felt this sense of loneliness, she was an island and not able to make contact with the rest of the world somehow. And that sense of loneliness, I mean, that's only escalated in recent times in our societies. Across the world, loneliness is considered to be escalating more than ever before, even though there's seven billion of us, even though we have mobile devices, even though we have all this way to connect with each other, that sense of loneliness is very big. And again, I think that's an expression of this sense of separateness, hence the need to experience some sort of a greater power, a higher power in our life. For sure.

Colette:  
Let's talk about the impetus of your new book. So you wrote that obviously in the past couple of years while we were under lockdown.

Robert:  
That was my COVID project.

Colette:  
That was your COVID project. So what was the impetus for the writing of that? Because I know you're always very inspired when you get down to write and you had that Oracle card, the Bear, which is to hunker down and do it and separate out until you were finished. So tell me about the throughway of your thinking for that book.



Robert:

Yeah. Well I think one of the things I noticed, especially at the beginning of COVID, was how the people in my life who were really on purpose and were truly living a purpose centered life, were very sustained by that sense of purpose. It made them resilient. They were agile, they were available to inspiration. They were reinventing themselves often like everybody else. Like my friend who ran the restaurant, who is now doing a takeaway service, because that's what you had to do at the beginning of COVID, wasn't it? You know, had to go from people sitting in your restaurant to home delivery. Well, I'll send the food out to everybody. I found that people who were on purpose were very, very resilient and I was really inspired by that. And they were working with COVID as an invitation.

Colette:

Yeah, that's what we did. A hundred percent.

Robert:

Yeah.

Colette:

Ooh, I wonder what we need to pivot next with.

Robert:

Yeah, that's it.

Colette:

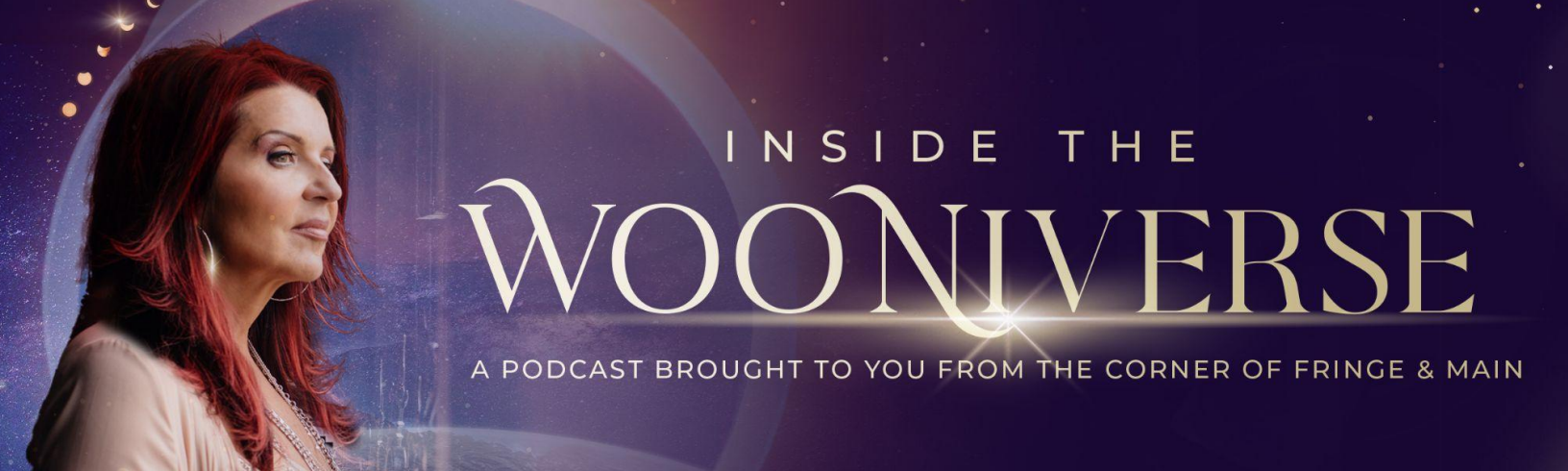
How do we serve? We have to find a different way. It was almost-

Robert:

Absolutely right.

Colette:

... inspiring. It felt inspiring and scary, but inspiring.



Robert:

Exactly. It was scary. We were as scared as everybody else, but somehow we could call upon that greater sense of purpose to support us. Now at the same time, there were other people in my life who weren't so purpose centered, if you like, But what I noticed was they were starting to talk about purpose and meaning. And they were starting to talk about, well, hold on, now that I've got all this free time, maybe I would like to start painting a bit more and maybe I would like to spend some time in the garden. Hey. And I don't have to do that commute anymore, and I don't have to go into the office and do that job that I don't like. But hey, it pays the bills. And so there was this new conversation emerging as well around purpose and meaning and living a life we love rather than one we just have to get through. So I think that was all part of it, very much. So therefore, the timing was right Colette, for me to really do this.

Colette:

I want to ask you something.

Robert:

Yes.

Colette:

I want to ask you something about this. So I have a theory and I want to hear your theory about this. So I believe that our purpose is built into us when we're born, that we literally have the blueprint for our purpose. That we don't have to look for it outside us. Everybody wants to look, where's my purpose, what's my purpose? And I believe a thousand percent, it's right here waiting for us to notice it and to hear it and to be inspired, which is of the spirit.

Robert:

Yeah.

Colette:

What's your idea about this?





Robert:

Yeah, well, I completely agree with you, Colette. For 10 years I hosted a radio show with Hay House called Shift Happens. We were often on the same day, weren't we?

Colette:

Yep.

Robert:

And we could have a little chats to each other in between the shows. But the most common question I was asked in those 10 years, it was a talk radio show. The most common question was, how do I find my purpose? And that was the question everybody asked. And in a sense, what became clear to me really was that for a lot of people, firstly, they were scared they didn't have a purpose. So actually what they were experiencing is what I call purpose anxiety. The fear that I haven't got a purpose. What if I'm the odd one out? What if everybody else has got a purpose in life, but I'm the one that hasn't got a purpose?

Which by the way, I would take to be another expression of our sense of separateness. What if I'm the odd one out? What if I'm the special case? What if I'm the faulty model in the factory? And every other model's created perfectly except for me. But yeah, I would say usually when we are searching for our purpose, that would suggest we are not paying attention. Because you don't really need to search for your purpose.

Colette:

I know. I feel the same way. And I realize sometimes people get very thrown off when I say, You need to get still.

Robert:

Yeah.

Colette:

No, I should be looking. I should be out there. I can go and get it. And I'm like, No, no, no, We're not hustling. We're not hustling to find your purpose. We're going to be still-



Robert:  
Exactly right.

Colette:  
So you can hear it.

Robert:  
Exactly right.

Colette:  
Speak to you.

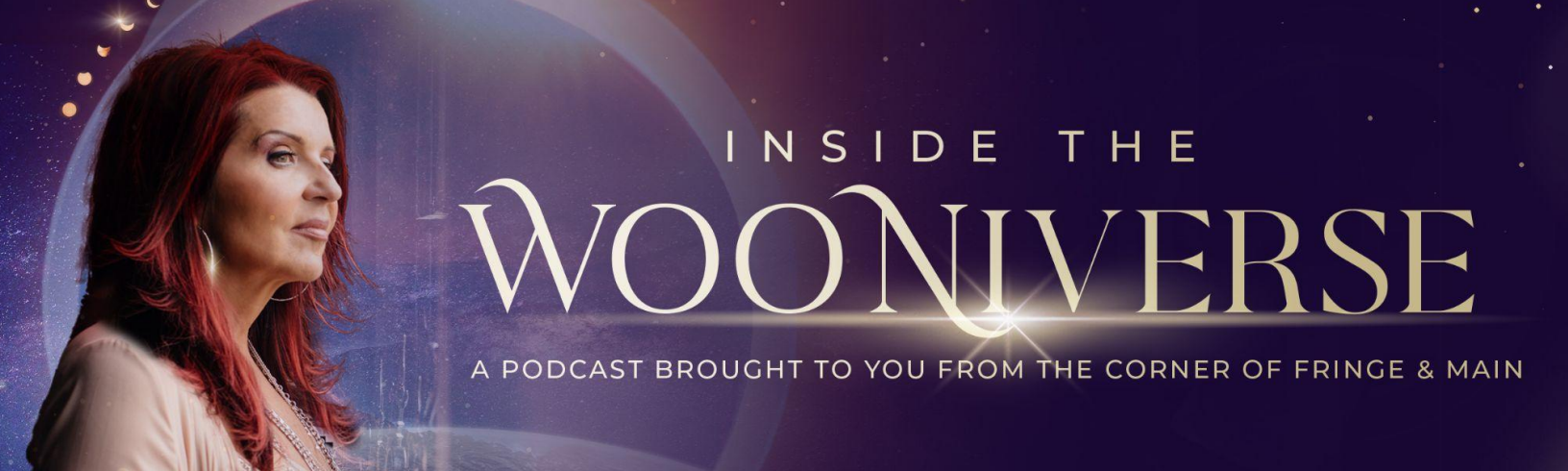
Robert:  
Yeah. And I think that actually, firstly, I think a lot of people are afraid they don't have a purpose. So when they say, I'm looking for my purpose, they're not really looking. They're just scared that they haven't got a purpose. But then I think to your point here as well, I think a lot of times when people are searching for a purpose, what they want is a definition.

Colette:  
Right, or a job.

Robert:  
Yeah. Define my purpose for me.

Colette:  
Define purpose.

Robert:  
I do get that a lot. And one of the things that I've attempted to do in the book is what I do in my work, essentially, which is rather than help people define their purpose, to help them to recognize when they are on purpose. I think purpose is so big that you can't define it. I think it's undefinable. I think the soul's undefinable, I think you and I are undefinable. Let's not define ourselves. That would be a lack of imagination. Instead of trying to define ourselves, let's



appreciate who we are. Let's recognize ourselves, let's express ourselves. So my work is really about helping people recognize when they are on purpose. And that's easy to do when you know how. And that's really what I'm helping people to do.

Colette:

That's fantastic. Oh, I can hardly wait to dive into this. Oh, I am loving this conversation so much, but we have to take a little break. More with Robert Holden when we come back. And we're back with psychologists and brilliant man, Robert Holden. Okay. So let's switch topics a little bit, because you're actually one of the greatest teachers on the Enneagram around the world. I mean, you're actually known as that. For our listeners at home who have never heard of the system. I just want to get into the simplicity of it. What the heck isn't Enneagram?

Robert:

Yeah, the Enneagram. Wow. Well, let's even start with the name. I mean it doesn't sound great, does it? Enneagram. What is the Enneagram? That's not good branding.

Colette:

Sounds like something's coming to the house. You're getting an Enneagram.

Robert:

Yeah, exactly. So Enneagram is a Greek word, compound word. It means model of nine. And fundamentally the Enneagram goes back two and a half thousand years at least. An oral tradition, a paperless trail. We know it has something to do with Greece for sure. The Enneagram is a Greek word, but it might even go back further than that, actually. It might be Egyptian. But fundamentally it's a model of nine. And the Enneagram presents to us nine personality types, essentially. And these types help us to understand our egos operating system like the autopilot that we all run with. But it also offers us this great path of growth and great path of awareness.

And it helps us, I think, to really build a genuinely healthy ego, but also connect to our soul and to our higher power. And for that reason, I just think it is one of the great, great models of self-awareness and self growth that I have ever come across. And Colette, I do feel most on purpose when I am teaching the Enneagram for sure. I've included a chapter on Enneagram



and purpose in Higher Purpose for sure. And I love to teach it. And fact, even tomorrow I'm heading to Greece to teach for four days on the end Enneagram.

Colette:

Oh, I'm so jealous.

Robert:

So I'm super excited.

Colette:

I wanted to come.

Robert:

Yeah. But once people get the hang of the Enneagram, they love it. Yeah, I love it.

Colette:

And I love to teach it here, there and everywhere. Last week I was with Unilever teaching leadership in the Enneagram.

Robert:

Wow.

Colette:

I've got a program coming up with Caroline Myss, where we're going to do Purpose and the Enneagram together. I've signed up for that.

Robert:

Oh, amazing. But I mean, once you discover it's great. But Colette, can I ask you as well, what is it that you love about the Enneagram? What sort of sparked your interest and your love?



Colette:

My fascination for the Enneagram, first of all, I took the test and the test was so on point. I'm a seven with an eight wing, so I totally understood myself. I was reading it going, Wow, that is so me. So it was kind of like being witnessed by some strange numeric equation.

Robert:

Yes.

Colette:

But so deeply, because the Enneagram is not, it is complex. It is it not as simplistic. It's nine numbers, but it's not simple. It really speaks to so many different layers of the persona. And I could see how I've evolved. So it has helped me evolve when it's healthy, when I'm off track. And I can notice that. Because I know when I'm off, when the seven is off, I know exactly. Oh, here I go. Oh boy, we're going manic now. We're a little over enthusiastic. No, no, no. But it helps. It's also helped me understand other people and my friendships with people.

So I think for anyone that knows others that works with others, having an understanding of the Enneagram really helps you understand or want to understand others. But also that you have facets of every single one of these in you. So you are not just, I am not just a seven. I'm influenced by so many of the others that I can see myself as a human being reflected in this system at various, I need to, Oh, I should actually be more the four in this area. You can really learn. I mean, if people are interested in diving completely in. Did you study at all with Russ Hudson?

Robert:

That's how I began.

Colette:

That's how I began. Yeah.

Robert:

Yeah. So Russ, wow. I mean, Russ was absolutely was my first teacher along with his partner Don Riso, who's sadly not with us anymore. But yeah, this would've been back in 2003. And



actually it was pretty radical really, because I had gone, I was in Helsinki and I was picking up my doctorate in the morning. There was a big lavish ceremony for the doctorate. And then in the afternoon, my friend America Borg, who's like the Opal Winfrey of Finland, she's a household name there and does all this amazing work. She took me to a cafe called Robert's Cafe, and she said, "I bought you here, Robert, because they serve great coffee and I'm going to introduce you to the Enneagram." And she got out of napkin and she drew the Enneagram symbol with its nine points. And for the next two or three hours, she just started to talk to me about the Enneagram.

And it was an amazing day because with a doctorate, you are writing up your contribution to the field. And so in a way, you are writing up what you've been up to. And that was the morning. And then in the afternoon here, I was presented with the Enneagram, which really became my future. It was amazing, really. And very soon after that went on an event with Russ and Don. And I just found it the most accurate, enlightening, insightful, helpful, practical thing you can imagine. I did understand that one of the great concerns people have is am I being typed again by another model? But once you understand that your type isn't your identity, it's the operating system of your ego.

Colette:

No, it's fluid.

Robert:

Yeah, it's very fluid. It's more like you've got an Enneagram style rather than an Enneagram type.

Colette:

Yes. They should probably change the language.

Robert:

Yeah. Once you've got that down though, you're really into it. And then of course, as you say, every type has a path of growth. So for example, I mean literally what I was talking about with the Happiness Project, giving up the search for happiness. So as you follow your joy, in many ways that's the path of seven, isn't it?



Colette:

Yep, it is.

Robert:

Stop searching and start paying attention to what's already here and live it. So that's one of the great lessons at point seven. For me as a type three, it was about how can I be less busy and more on purpose? That was one-

Colette:

Interesting. What would an eight be?

Robert:

The eight is called the Challenger.

Colette:

That's my husband. I have to know.

Robert:

The names that we give to the Enneagram types point out a person's outlook and also the sort of social role that they want to take on. So the Challenger is looking for a challenge in life. They want a challenge. They want to feel fully alive, they want to take life on, they want to play big, they want to give it their full go.

Colette:

That's him.

Robert:

That's the challenge. And in fact, if they don't have a challenge, they often-

Colette:

Miserable.



Robert:

Yeah miserable, absolutely miserable.

Colette:

And they have to get the challenge. That's the thing.

Robert:

Well, there you go.

Colette:

There you go.

Robert:

So there's the great work. The great work is what is the real challenge of my life.

Colette:

Yeah.

Robert:

What is the real challenge of my life? I might have built an empire, but have I learned to pay attention to the language of my heart?

Colette:

That is so meaningful.

Robert:

That might be the challenge of our life. Who knows? But it's like sometimes the big challenge is so close we don't even see it. And whilst we are running off building empires and doing everything else, which looks really big, the really big thing might be really close to home. Maybe it's have I learned to experience the love of God?

Colette:

Yeah.





Robert:

Could it be that?

Colette:

I think the issue that we have around what is big and what is small is what we're conditioned to see as big or small as meaningful, less meaningful as prosperous, less prosperous. All of those things that are built into our social order, that is changing. I mean, we're really in the big experiment right now. Nobody really knows how we're going to end up, but everything is up for grabs and there's so much to change. But what doesn't change are these ancient systems like the Enneagram, because that is universality, that is all about the universal human. That is about a soulful being that is conscious and evolving. And the capacity to evolve is there, which is why I consider the Enneagram an oracular tool, because it speaks wisdom.

That's what the whole point of oracles are. They're not about predicting the future. They're about tracking where we are and navigating this moment so that we can choose, because we are choosers. We are deciders before we are doers. That's a quote from the ancient ruins. So that's what I love about the Enneagram, and I love the way you teach it because one of the things that you teach is about how it can help us release our inner blocks. Can you speak a little bit about that?

Robert:

Well, that is very much what the Enneagram was for, right in the beginning. Was this idea that really life is on our side. There is guidance, there is wisdom, there is love available to us every step of the way. And yet for the most part, we're often in doubt. We often feel very, very lost. We are not really sure of what our next step is. And so the people who in the early days were putting the Enneagram together, were really identifying these paths of growth that us humans need to take. And essentially that's what the Enneagram is helping us with. It's helping us to grow and to become our full self. In Greek, there's a word called anthropos, which means to be fully human and fully divine. So that's what we're trying to do with the Enneagram. We're trying to individuate and become our full true self.

And as you say, these are universal laws. This is all back to Plato and Aristotle and Pythagoras. It's all about essentially these paths of growth that are there for us if we have the eyes to see



them. And we will resonate with one of these nine paths of growth. And along the way, as you also said, we'll meet all of the types. So to learn to appreciate them all and love them all and swap gifts with each other is a really wonderful thing to do.

Colette:

And I think also, I mean, when you take the test, because that's what, if people are going to wonder, how do I take this test? So we'll put information up on the show notes, but when you take the test, you realize you're being seen by this like, Oh wow, this really makes sense to where I am. Because sometimes I can, the two and the seven are really close for me. And I think I had zero on one, I had zip, and it was just very interesting. All my answers were in one section. But to also recognize sometimes you have to take a look at some of the other numbers on the Enneagram and see what you could learn from them. How you could become more whole by integrating some of the others that are missing in you, for example.

Robert:

Yeah.

Colette:

Right?

Robert:

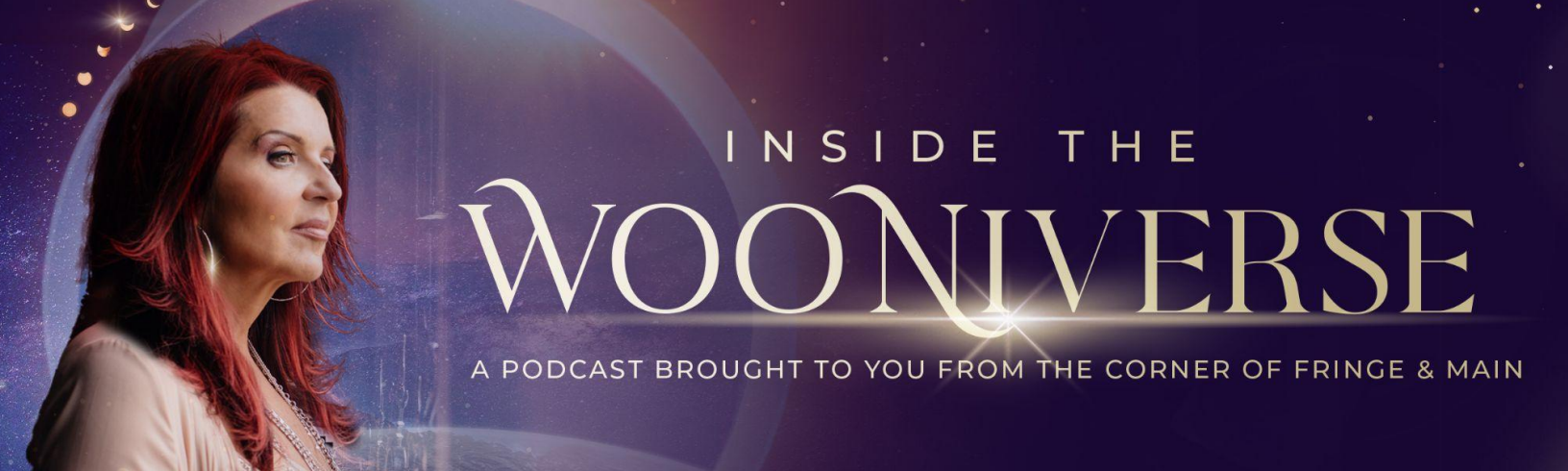
That's right. That's exactly right.

Colette:

Which is a lot more complex.

Robert:

So you can use the Enneagram in such a way that those nine types, those nine points on the Enneagram become like nine meditation seats. And so you can say, Well, I'm going to go and sit on meditation seat number one for a moment and really find the gift there, for example. And you become, yeah, the idea is you do, but you're becoming more whole, more rounded. And also you're using the Enneagram to almost like nine lenses. So for example, when I worked with Dove and the Real beauty campaign in Canada, in North America, around the world, I coached



three of the presidents of Dove. And when I was working with the leadership team, we used the Enneagram to look at beauty. So nine lenses, looking at beauty so as to have a much more diverse appreciation of what true beauty is.

So rather than just selling that sort of stereotypical image of a certain size and a certain height and a certain weight, we really changed that up. And the Enneagrams brilliant for that. Being able just to help us to see things from a different angle and with new lenses, and again, a greater appreciation and more diversity. So yeah, that's another way to work with the Enneagram, which is amazing.

Colette:

I love that. Okay, so let's pull a card together and to see if there's anything else the wooniverse wants us to talk about.

Robert:

What are we picking from today?

Colette:

We're going to pick from, Oh, do you have the spirit animal deck? That was your favorite deck?

Robert:

Yes.

Colette:

Let's pick from the one you have.

Robert:

Yeah, for sure. Love that deck.

Colette:

Yes. I was so thrilled when you wrote me that you were all picking that up in, you were in Findhorn choosing from my card deck. I was very happy.



Robert:

Yeah, was a bunch of friends of us. We were sitting around the table and we just had this great conversation after we picked your cards. They were so brilliant. But also, by the way, it's not the cards. Can I tell you, Colette, it's your descriptions. It's how you write the descriptions for the card. They are masterful. They are-

Colette:

Thank you.

Robert:

So good. We always stopped by every single description and invitation to meditate that you give us. Oh, they're so amazing. Yeah. So that's why I had to write you immediately and thank you.

Colette:

Oh, thank you. Well, it is the writing of the actual Oracle's work. They don't work just with the pictures and my Oracles don't. They aren't meant to, they are meant to be complex and speak to the spirit in a way that only writing can do. So it's they go together. So thank you for noticing that. Yes. Okay. All right. So I've got them in my hand and you're going to say when?

Robert:

Okay, when.

Colette:

Top, middle or bottom?

Robert:

Top. Straight up.

Colette:

Okay. We are meant to speak about moth spirit, which is about surrendering.

Robert:

Brilliant. Oh, I love that.



Colette:

So I'm going to go first. The concept of surrender is about us giving up control. And I think that speaks to the strident need for certainty that we all have, that we have to see things a certain way, and therefore we don't leave space for all the others. So for me, that's what this card represents just in a nutshell. And goes along with, happiness comes when we let go our tight hold on how things should be. And we see the beauty of how things are. What do you think?

Robert:

Love that. Love that. Yeah. For me, I think the first thing that comes up is surrendering all attempts to do something by myself.

Colette:

I love that.

Robert:

I just seem to run into trouble in my life whenever I'm trying to do it by myself. Even when that comes to writing a book or a poem or a newsletter, running my business, having a coaching conversation with somebody. When I'm trying to do it by myself, I just run into trouble. And yet I have that old habit of wanting to be self-reliant. That would go back to the trauma of mom and dad. I had to be self-reliant as a teenager. But self-reliance is cool, but it can, too much of a good thing isn't a good thing. And so I think I've learned to be what I call less dysfunctionally independent, and that's more surrendered, more open and available to that help. So I see surrender as that now as a really cool invitation for allowing more inspiration and grace to come through.

Colette:

Well, I love that you said that about grace, because when I got clean and sober, when I hit bottom, that was the first moment of surrender where I literally surrendered in absolute faith without any certainty. I had no idea. All I knew was that I couldn't keep going. I just had no clue.

Robert:

I love that.



Colette:

And I remembered what that felt like. It's like to lean back and to surrender, just to say, Okay, I'm trusting that the world will catch me and there'd be another step into the unknown. So I do think surrendering that you said, I love the dysfunctional independence to a partnership with spirit.

Robert:

Yeah, absolutely. Beautifully said. And I know for myself as well, often I can resist surrender as much as anything. And yet the relief of finally surrendering.

Colette:

It feels so good. It's like, why didn't I think of this before? It's because sometimes we just can't. And I think it's also because of that instinct for survival, it reminds us that we're afraid to change because it's threatening.

Robert:

Exactly.

Colette:

It's threatening to change, but we better get used to it because there's going to be a whole lot.

Robert:

But I think the reason like you and I run our mastermind programs and things like that is because we know that when we stop trying to do it by ourselves and we really join with a community of people, so much more is possible. And again, I think this comes back to the great wound that humanity's dealing with, which is we're trying to deal with things by ourself instead of by a higher power and in community. And yet when we do join in and get the support of a community and everything that you are doing, Colette, that's when the whole new level of inspiration and grace appears. For sure.

Colette:

I love it. I love it. We're going to take a little break now, and when we come back, we're going to switch gears and enter another dimension of the Wooniverse, the Tee Time After Party. So please stay with us. We'll be right back. And we're back. Okay. This is so inspiring. We are going



to switch gears now and travel into another dimension of the Wooniverse called the Tea Time After Party, A place where we kick up the fun. Joining us now is my executive producer, Connie Diletti, are you ready, Robert and Connie?

Robert:  
Hey, Connie.

Connie:  
Hey. Oh, I'm so ready. You are all having so much fun. I'm so excited to come to the party now.

Colette:  
How about you asked the first question, Connie?

Connie:  
Oh, sure. Okay. That's exciting. Okay. Robert, do you have an unusual talent?

Colette:  
That we don't know about.

Connie:  
That's not public.

Robert:  
Well, one of my most unusual talents I think, is that I, before I give a talk now, I tend to dance on stage.

Connie:  
Okay.

Colette:  
Cool.



Robert:

And I never expected that to happen, but it was rather forced upon me. I came on stage once after Brian Wise had actually sent 5,000 people into a hypnosis, and they were so relaxed. And then I had to give my talk that I remember I decided to put some music on and just start dancing, like me on a stage by myself.

Connie:

That's amazing.

Colette:

Oh my God, that's so great. And you're pretty good at it, you found out.

Robert:

It took off a little bit. By the way, I would just say, and then a couple of years later at school, I heard one day that Christopher, he must have been, my son, he was about seven or eight at the time, was asked, What does your dad do for a living? And he said, I think he goes to America and dances in front of people.

Colette:

Yes. That's that's-

Connie:

Wonderful.

Colette:

Hysterical.

Connie:

Yes. That's great.

Colette:

Oh my God.





Connie:  
Wow.

Colette:  
Okay. I have another question. What is the zaniest fashion trend you've ever rocked?

Robert:  
Well, look, heavy metal was a big thing for me when I was younger. Iron Maiden Motorhead, they were my boys. I mean, a Motorhead concert was a thing of great beauty. ACDC concerts, I used to love going to ACDC concerts. You'd have this line of people as you were going into the stadium who were praying for you. They had the Bible and they were praying for you because you were about to go and watch ACDC, which I always thought was very lovely of them to do so, very nice-

Colette:  
Did you have the hair?

Robert:  
Very kind. But I had the long hair. I was in a rock band called Nervous.

Colette:  
Nervous. Love it.

Robert:  
And that's my music. And I still go to concerts. I mean, I went to see White Snake recently with David Coverdale, who's still going.

Colette:  
Yeah, I like White Snake.

Robert:  
So that's pretty good. So that was my, I have never let that go. I mean, that music's amazing. Brilliant.



Colette:

Love it. Okay, Connie, over to you.

Connie:

I just love just how you started that answer. When you start an answer with Look.

Colette:

Look.

Connie:

Look.

Colette:

Okay, I was a hard rocker.

Connie:

I was getting ready. I was like, What you got to tell us now. Okay, that's amazing.

Colette:

You have to send us a picture of, do you have a picture-

Robert:

Hold on -

Colette:

Oh, he's got a picture.

Connie:

Oh great.

Robert:

I can show you if you can see that. See-



Colette:

Oh my God, I want to see you with long-

Robert:

Just proof that I still have the guitar. There you go.

Colette:

Wow.

Connie:

Nervous. I love that name for a band.

Colette:

His band was called Nervous and he has long hair.

Connie:

Love that name.

Colette:

Oh my God, Robert.

Connie:

Love that name. Okay. Wow.

Robert:

We had every right to be nervous. We were not good.

Colette:

You weren't any good. I love that part.

Connie:

So this is the next question, which we may already have the answer. If you could be wildly successful in another profession, what would you choose?



Robert:  
Oh my God.

Connie:  
Rockstar.

Robert:  
Yeah.

Connie:  
I mean-

Colette:  
Hey, pretty much yeah.

Robert:  
Yeah. That is pretty good, isn't it? Oh my God. Yeah. I mean, obviously to be a rock guitarist would be a great thing. I mean, it would. Yeah, that is absolutely true. So-

Colette:  
Just want to be a rockstar. Why not?

Robert:  
If I could do that, but also, can I tell you as well, if I could be in any band in the world it would be Earth, Wind & Fire.

Colette:  
Earth, Wind & Fire.

Robert:  
I think if you want a band that has come into the planet and just delivering joy left, right, and center, it would be Earth, Wind & Fire. And I think they're amazing.



Colette:

I would be a backup singer for Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

Robert:

Would you?

Colette:

That's my, those are my people.

Robert:

Yeah.

Colette:

Those are my people.

Robert:

Yeah. I would be a backup singer for Earth, Wind & Fire. And I wouldn't even sing. I'd just mime.

Colette:

You'd just mime.

Robert:

I told them that one.

Colette:

You wouldn't even do dancing

Connie:

You would be a back up dancer for Earth, Wind & Fire.

Robert:

Seriously.



Colette:

You could be a dancer.

Connie:

Yeah, absolutely.

Robert:

I could be a dancer. In fact, one, can I tell you, I was at an Earth, Wind & Fire concert once, and I was just dancing away and there were these girls behind me in the encore, jumped over their seats to come and dance with me. And it turned out they were the wives of Earth, Wind & Fire.

Connie:

What?

Colette:

No.

Robert:

And they took me backstage to go meet the guys, and that was really cool. That was one of the greatest times of my life.

Connie:

Oh that's great.

Robert:

And that was amazing. So yeah.

Colette:

That's very cool.

Connie:

What is the best or worst job you've ever had when you were younger? Like a first type of job?



Robert:

Yeah. Okay. Well, I think the big one probably was, I was working on the New York stock market for an investment bank called Bear Sterns.

Colette:

Bear Stern.

Robert:

That no longer exists.

Colette:

Wow.

Robert:

Bear Sterns, may they rest in peace. And it was on Wall Street. And now this is the strangeness of life. I was offered a job that essentially guaranteed me a million dollar salary pretty quickly.

Colette:

What?

Robert:

Not straight away, but pretty quickly. So by then I was meditating and praying, and I sat down and I said to my higher team, Good news, everybody. I've just been given this big great job.

Colette:

I'm going to be rich.

Robert:

I'm sure you are aware. I'm sure you're aware I've been given this job. I'm just checking in. I know it's going to be a yes, but I thought I should just out of politeness check in with you. And astonishingly it was, No, this job's not for you. So anyway, I gave them more time to reconsider their position and took several weeks over this going back to them again and again. But-



Colette:

He is talking by the way about his spirit guides and his spiritual team.

Robert:

My spirit guides. Yeah.

Colette:

He's not talking about Bear Stearns job. It's his spirit guides that are basically telling him forget it. Forget about it. Okay.

Connie:

Forget about it.

Robert:

Forget it. They were saying, Look, this is a path, and if you want this path, you can go for it or you can take another path and we can put you in touch with everything that money can't buy.

Colette:

Oh geez. That's beautiful.

Robert:

Yeah.

Colette:

Okay. I have another question. Do you observe any superstitions?

Robert:

I'm trying not to.

Colette:

Come on.





Connie:

It's okay you can tell us.

Colette:

This is group telling, this is-

Connie:

Safe container, Robert.

Colette:

Yeah. This is a safe container. Only thousands of people will hear about it, only.

Robert:

Yeah. No, but it's to do, Look, I support a football team, a soccer team-

Colette:

A soccer team.

Robert:

... called West Ham United, and we don't win very often.

Colette:

Okay.

Robert:

It's one of the reasons why I became a philosopher is because my football team never wins and it's difficult. And so when they do win, I have to backtrack and think, what was it that I did that made the result go right?

Connie:

Like the socks, the hat-



Robert:

It's that sort of thing. And so then it'll be about wearing the right socks and the right underpants, just to make sure that West Ham have a good result again today.

Connie:

So where are you at right now? What would you wear to the next West Ham game?

Colette:

Yeah.

Robert:

The next West Ham game, I would, because we're not doing well right now. It has to be said, we've lost, we have lost a few games. Actually, my lucky mascot is to bring my son Christopher. When he goes, they seem to win. And in fact, if I come with him, everyone around us is really excited. And I'm really pleased that Christopher's coming. If I go by myself, they're like, Oh, nice to see you.

Colette:

Oh my gosh.

Robert:

Yeah, he's my lucky mascot.

Connie:

That's amazing.

Colette:

Anyway, thank you so much for joining us today.

Robert:

Oh my God, this was fun this bit.



Colette:

I'm so glad you liked it.

Connie:

Glad you liked it.

Robert:

I love it.

Colette:

To learn more about Robert and his offerings, you can visit [him@robertholden.com](mailto:him@robertholden.com). You can always find a transcript of each episode, quotes, and so much more on our show notes page. So go to [itwpodcast.com](http://itwpodcast.com) or click within this episode's description. Robert, you know how much I love you. Thank you so much for joining us today. What a great conversation.

Robert:

Oh my God, I'm so happy I finally visited the Wooniverse.

Colette:

Yes, you did.

Robert:

And I got to spend time with you Colette. I got to spend time with Connie as well. I was absolutely amazing. Thank you so, so much. Christopher. Christopher's right here.

Colette:

Okay. Christopher.

Connie:

Christopher.

Colette:

Hi, Christopher.



Connie:  
Hi Christopher.

Colette:  
Hello.

Robert:  
We just been talking about you and West Ham.

Colette:  
You have to go to the game or West Ham will lose.

Robert:  
Yeah, you're our lucky mascot.

Connie:  
No pressure.

Colette:  
So what did we learn today from this fantastic conversation that we've had with Robert Holden? I want to just go back to the moth spirit card that we had already pulled and the concept of surrender. I've read all of his books. His whole concept of the Happiness Project really was about surrendering to the moment and radically accepting what you discover and putting love into it. And that's the simplest thing. I mean, it is so, so simple and yet we complicate it so much, all of us. So I think what all of us could do a little bit more is to surrender to our joy and surrender to a relationship with spirit. And remember that we're all connected. There is no separation. And that's what we learned today. So thank you for listening. We're INSIDE THE WOONIVERSE. I'm Colette Baron-Reid. Until next time, be well.