

## TRANSCRIPT

E098: Ashley Wray on Finding Peace in Your Own Life Through Meditation, Turning Curiosity into a Business, and Defining What Success Means to You

**Intro Clip, Ashley Wray:** I've had people say to me, I wish something would fall on my lap like it fell into yours. And I know that that's that was a lot of love. And I, the way I always respond to that now is there's so many opportunities for serendipity and there's so many opportunities for us to meet people that can change our lives and we can change there's, there's so much opportunity for this exchange and for new paths to be taken, as long as we're open to it. And I think it's really about being open to these opportunities because they happen to us all of the time. But we often approach it with that's too good to be true or really skeptical.

**Shannan Monson:** Welcome to CEO school. We're your hosts Suneera Madhani and Shannan Monson, and we believe that you deserve to have it all. Less than 2% of female founders ever break 1 million in revenue, and we're on a mission to change that. Each week, you'll learn from incredible mentors who have made it to the 2% Club, as well as women well on their way sharing how they defied the odds so that you can do it to your real business now, class is officially in session.

This episode is sponsored by The Club, a Quarterly box and digital monthly community to help you level up and leadership and life. Learn more today at [join.theceoschool.co/theclub](https://join.theceoschool.co/theclub)

### **Shannan Monson**

Welcome to today's podcast. I'm so excited to introduce you to Ashley Wray. Ashley is the founder and CEO of Mala Collective, which is a company which works with artisans in Asia from Bali to India to Nepal to create products supporting a mindfulness and meditation practice, which is something that every ambitious woman entrepreneur needs, in my opinion. So I'm really excited to introduce you to her and her story since starting the mala collective in 2011. Ashley is taught meditation across North America, taking meditation trainings from LA to New York to India and Bali in his work to make meditation and mindfulness more accessible and fun. So Ashley, thank you so much for coming on the show today. Really excited to chat with you.

### **Ashley Wray**

Thank you so much for having me. I'm so grateful. Thank you.

### **Shannan Monson**

I want to start with a question. I'd love to ask how did you get here? So how did you go from? And I'm very curious, as someone that is passionate about mindfulness meditation, is this something that you have always been passionate about? Or is there something in your life that really made you start down this path?

### **Ashley Wray**

Well, I have a great answer to that. And I mean, I think it's I know everybody has a very interesting entrepreneurial journey. And I actually was a journalist covering murder trials before I started my business. So it was the exact opposite of what I do now. So I was a journalist covering murder trials, won a national award had you know what many of us who call it quarter life crisis ended up in Bali is, as a lot of people do. And then that soul searching journey, and fell in love with mindfulness meditation. I think that most people assumed I was deeply into meditation before I started business. But really, I was just curious about meditation. And mind you this was 10 years ago. And meditation wasn't as prevalent as it is now. Everybody talks very openly about their meditation practices. Now 10 years ago, it wasn't that way. So when I was in Bali, I fell in love with these mala beads. A woman came up to us on the plane, as we were flying from Bali, Thailand, she sat down, she said, your aura is so beautiful. I sit and talk to you. Long story short, she ends up being the same woman that made the mala beads that we had bought in Bali. And her guru told her get these beads to the west, they embody peace, the more people wear them, the more the world will be at peace, but the West needs peace the most. And we said cool, we did peace we're in will help you. So that's how Moloch collective started. And I mean, the entire journey has been my own exploration and seeking of what is mindfulness? what is meditation? How do we make it beautiful? How do we make it light? How do we make it accessible, so it's been an incredible 10 years.

### **Shannan Monson**

That's so beautiful, but I want to go back, I want to go back to the part where you wrote about murder, because they feel like this has got to be a very, like, emotionally taxing job. I consider myself I'm murderous. Now I enjoy the podcasts. I don't know why I can't stop watching. But I can't imagine how emotionally taxing writing about some of the most horrific, horrible parts of humanity is for your job. So how did you come home? I mean, I want to hear more about this burnout. Because I think there's a lot of people that get into jobs, there must have been something that got you into that job in the first place that you thought, you know, this is going to be exciting. This is going to be I don't know, like I'm talking me through that journey. And at what point did you realize I just can absolutely no longer do this anymore.

### **Ashley Wray**

Well, I always joke with journalism. I was paid to be nosy and I am such a curious person. So I got paid to do what I love. Just ask questions and it's so interesting. As a journalist, I deeply miss it the ability to pop into someone's life and get a view of their life and ask questions and really reflect back to them how unique their journey is. I just found journalism, so fantastic and so interesting. And I actually was an arts and entertainment editor. And it just all happened because I live close to the courthouse. This is when, you know, 10 years ago, when newspapers were taking, you know, the probably, you know, I would say, one of the first rounds of hits because it's not stopped. But I just lived close to the courthouse, my editor said to save money, you're now covering murder, even though you're an arts editor. So it was never a goal of mine to cover murder. And it was, it was very easy to become obsessive about it. And it was, it was off my mind all of the time. It's all I would talk about breakfast, lunch, and dinner, to my friends. And it's, it's such a not overwhelming experience. It's not healthy, it's overwhelming. And the reason I

ended was I won a national award. And I covered a really heart wrenching story and became friends with the mom of this little girl that was murdered. And at the end of this story, I went to her home or to Starbucks little girl. And the mom said, this was the most healing closure I've ever been able to receive to tell her story and know that someone I trust is sharing it. And I just thought, what level of human connection and beauty and love and karma and this this experience in this exchange I had with this person, it was so profound, I thought, I don't think I'll ever get that again in journalism. And not that I was the best journalist not going to have anything else to learn. But there just felt it just felt like a moment of closure. It felt like okay, I think that's what I was meant to do. And I've never watched a show on murder or listened to a podcast or watching news, Netflix shows, because living is such a uniquely profound, overwhelming experience that I don't think I need to relive it. And, you know, the first time I started writing about meditation, I thought, Oh, I love this so much more. It's such a beautiful topic.

### **Shannan Monson**

I want to think what's really interesting to me is that there was this common thread here of human connection that you you you felt, okay, I want more of this helping people come to peace and find that in their lives at peace is something you said already a few times through this episode. You were really connected deeply with that? And how can I do that in a way that's coming from, you know, all the beauty and goodness in the world? So how did you get into meditation? And, you know, I'm trying to think of how did you you got into this sounds like a hobby or part of your life? And then how did you go from this is something I do every day to? Actually, you know, I just met this artisan, and I want to turn it into a business.

### **Ashley Wray**

Yeah, and you know, we didn't even think let's turn this into a business. This was my partner night at the time. And we thought, let's just help this really cool hippie lady out, she really wants to spread peace, we can do that with her. And then it started growing. And it was never with the intention of turning it into a business, I think, you know, it's quite a cliché thing to hear, like, if I had to know who would become my word, they've done it. Like, I never thought I'd be writing a million dollar business and teaching meditation and running a team, because there's so many low points that too, it's learning how to be a leader, learning how to run a team learning Ops, logistics, and HR, and payroll, and p&l. All of those things, even now intimidate me 10 years in, and I realized I don't have to know the ins and outs of everything. There's so many people smarter than me. But in the beginning, you know, we weren't looking at as a business. We were looking at it as this thing that we were just really curious about. And I was curious about meditation, I was curious about how do we make this accessible? And actually, the way I approached it was, if I have all these questions, I bet other people have questions about it, too. And I really, you know, looking back now, I suppose that that journalistic approach of asking questions, and being curious, is really what set it for us in the beginning is understanding? Well, I don't, I don't go back and sit there for 30 minutes with zero thoughts. So I wonder if there's other ways to meditate, because that's my thought meditation was? So it was just this curiosity tour, this curiosity, seeking of what is mindfulness? what is meditation? Can we make it a bit lighter? And can we explore what it means to us? And if we share that, you know, I really want

to make it like this buffet of what it can be to people and people can choose their own approach to connect themselves. That's really all it is. It's about connecting to yourself.

### **Shannan Monson**

I love this theme of following your curiosity. Because I think a lot of times, we feel like I need to have a business plan. I need all my ducks in a row. And I need to have all the answers and hearing you say, you know, it wasn't even my intention to turn it into a business. I was just following what made me curious. So a lot of people say like, how do I start? How do I get started? I love that you just follow? What made you curious until you kind of turned around and said, Hey, actually, I think that we could take this to the next level. So can you talk to us about that point where it went from, you know, following a curiosity to actually I'm ready to really turn this into a business and take it to the next level.

### **Ashley Wray**

Oh, Yeah, I remember that moment. But one thing I'm going to do before that is that that story of meeting this woman on the plane and being really open, you know, I've had people say to me, I wish something would fall on my lap, like it fell into yours. And I know that that's not what a lot of love and I, the way I always respond to that now is, there's so many opportunities for serendipity. And there's so many opportunities for us to meet people that can change our lives, and we can change there is, there's so much opportunity for this exchange, and for new paths to be taken, as long as we're open to it. And I think it's really about being open to these opportunities, because they happen to us all of the time. But we often approach it with that's too good to be true or really skeptical. And the caveat to that is I didn't have kids, I didn't have a mortgage. You know, I was in my 20s. When I have been that open minded. In my mid 30s. I don't I don't know, like, who knows what I would have done. All I know is in that moment, I was open to receiving and I was open to being curious. And I think that that openness is super important.

### **Shannan Monson**

So I want to dwell here, because this is really good advice, something you said that really stood out to me was that there's so many opportunities for serendipity. And I think that most of us think of serendipity is something that just happens and that perspective of Actually, I remained open to the possibilities I was open and willing to receive when it did fall on my lap. And how many times do we walk past opportunities that are serendipitous, because we're not open to receive them. So thank you for sharing that bit of wisdom. Okay, now, you may tell us about the moment.

### **Ashley Wray**

So that breaking point, I remember, I remember fondly because I went I went back into journalism then went into PR, and I was working nine to five as many people, you know, they're doing the hustle, and they're starting their own business, working nine to five, coming home working at 6pm till two in the morning, talking about self love and mindfulness and peace, and I hated everything, I was the antithesis to what we were talking about that I realized, Oh, I'm living so out of alignment of what this business represents. I this is the breaking point, it wasn't that I

now have this much money saved, or Yes, we reached our goals it was I can no longer function like this as a human being. And I talk about this a lot when I'm coaching. And what I'm working with entrepreneurs now is, I truly believe that we are our own backup plan that we will always figure it out. We know our stuff so much more than we give ourselves credit for, we often give that power away to others. My mindset at the time was okay, I'm going to quit my job. But I'm going to go all in. Because I got to this point I've gotten through everything that's been difficult up to this point, I can get another job if it comes down to it. And that's what I did you we moved into this city. And I didn't know anybody and I started waiting tables in the evening to start to make some money on the side. And wow, my ego that was such a that was such a hit to the ego of I'm a national award winning journalist, starting a business. And I'm going back to waiting tables. And I mean, I was a waitress for seven years. I loved it, it got me through university, I traveled the world with that money. But I mean, that felt like I was taking five steps backwards. And I had to realize, and anything that I am doing right now is to push forward this dream that's bigger than me. And it's okay. And it's humbling and it doesn't define who I am in this moment. And I lean into that hustle, and I lean into that curiosity. And if that's what it takes right now, that's what it takes right now. And if I want to stop again, a nine to five tomorrow, I can do that. And we're so capable to do that. It's it's not it's not permanent, unless we want to be permanent. So it was still adventurous.

### **Shannan Monson**

In the beginning, there's two things you said that really stood out to me. One is that you were really able to set your ego aside enough and being willing and humble enough to start back from zero. And I think sometimes we have to take two steps back to take 10 steps forward. And when you have the really self awareness to say, Okay, I appreciate that if I stay in a steady nine to five job, I don't have the time to build the dream. The way that I can build the dream is by waiting tables at night. And having the humility to say that I think is a really common experience that in the early stages of entrepreneurship, we all experience I mean, I know I remember, I you know, shutting down a new business and starting back from zero like that takes humility to say, if I felt at once I can do it again. And the other thing you said is we are our own backup plan. And I love the confidence that gave you to know that you weren't going back to zero. You were preparing yourself and you had your back. You were the backup plan. You had the backup plan. I think that's so beautiful. What are some of the top tips, you know, you're waiting tables, you're building this essentially, you know, from the ground up, what are some of the maybe the top three things that allowed you to get to a really steady place maybe your first six figures in revenue with the business

### **Ashley Wray**

I can talk with the biggest barriers, right? I opened in that time will take much. And I mean, I'm an extra step one, one moment back to waitressing. I was not always humbled looking back on it now I can talk about Yeah, it was really humbled there was days where I was very humbled. There was days where I was so resentful to my path that I This is so embarrassing. I refuse to shave my legs as a way to it like going to work in a skirt. I'm like, if I'm going to go in, I'm going to be a feminist. And I'm not going to let men hit on me, because I'm an entrepreneur. And I'm more than he was these little protests that I would do within myself, because I was battling my

ego. And they're so ridiculous and so silly. And that was the moment again, like we talked about breaking points, there was a moment where I realized actually me now being a waitress is like a massively a disservice. To me. It's, it was just too much for me for my, it wasn't necessarily my ego. It was just, it was time to go all in. So there's so many layers of going on.

### **Shannan Monson**

Okay, fair enough. Fair enough. We still have some resentment. I'm all fine here. Like team feminism. I'm here for not not shaving our legs. And it's interesting, too, because I think a lot of times when we're in these stages, where we don't know if we're gonna make it and we're doing the job we don't want to do to build a business, we want to do it. I think it's probably really affirming to hear from someone like you that has built this into a seven figure business. And, hey, it's okay, if you're not really happy and don't feel super aligned right now. Like that's part of the process and part of what's going to get you to the next level. So what were those barriers that you broke through to get to the next level?

### **Ashley Wray**

I would say the biggest barrier, it was me. And I know that that might sound like a corny kind of woo answer. But I carried so many limiting beliefs and to start in this business. And it was all around I am not good enough. I'm a journalist. What do I know I am a waitress, what do I know who am I to do this? And it was so clear to me that this business was so much bigger than me. We get these incredible emails from people saying, all these mala beads have helped me through divorce, that they've helped me through an abusive marriage. They've helped me through a sex change that helped me in coming out to my family. They've helped me with my kids going to college and I'm now an empty nester that these molars became this representative tool. This talisman is object is symbol of perseverance of growth of overcoming. And I would read these emails at night, you know, like in my underwear, eating Thai food and thinking, Oh, my God, these people are baring their soul to me, and they don't know that I don't really know what I'm doing. How dare I like how disrespectful that I'm the one receiving their emails. And so I would, I would just really, it was so much self talk. And I genuinely believe that the way we speak to ourselves, and the limiting beliefs are one of the biggest things holding us back in our business. And I, I truly believe that mindset is so important. And I didn't have a community at the time, I didn't have a coach at the time I was alone. And I was looking at asking for help as a weakness, you know, that whole stubborn, not shaving my legs, not asking for help. Yeah, there's, but it's actually very empowering to ask for help. And it's very empowering to be vulnerable and say what you don't know. And I didn't realize that I was quite naive, I was very alone. And as soon as I started surrounding myself with people, and as soon as I started investing in coaches, going to business groups, going to talks and being around people that were in the same boat, it would normalize that human experience. I think entrepreneurship is lonely enough as it is, you don't need to sit in that tower alone. You can share those experiences with people and as soon as it starts to normalize that experience. Oh, yeah. Okay, great. I'm not totally screwing this up. I'm not the only person to screw this up that bad. There's something so beautiful and human and sharing those experiences. And I think that was a massive hurdle for me to overcome. Probably the biggest hurdle to overcome in business. And I'm not saying that I've solved it. It is still an ongoing journey. It's not like I am perfect. I'm the best. Now that's that's

not where I am. It's, you know, talking about, you know, the beginning of our chat now is understand that this has all been led by curiosity out of that hole, low point for me, I did a meditation. This voice said to me, Ashley, You're so selfish by playing this small, get over yourself. You're robbing so many people have something so beautiful by being in this place of fear. Because this fear is comfortable for you, and you know it and you're friends with it now. Try it. Like, just get out of that and get over yourself. And so I really channeled that into the business and we designed a collection called I'm enough. And that has been probably for seven or eight years, our best selling collection every year. Because it is a very true authentic reflection of Yeah, a lot of us don't feel like we're enough. We don't feel like we're lovable. We don't feel like we're fearless. We don't feel like we're courageous. We don't like our patients like we're abundant. And this learning for me has been we are all of those things. It's creating space within ourselves to find it. So through journaling through meditating through walking. So now when I hit one of those cycles of feeling not enough, I now have those tools resources that can turn to. And I think that it's it's a forever practice. But overcoming that first hurdle was years in the making. And again, the biggest thing I think I had to overcome,

### **Shannan Monson**

I love what you said about the human experience because I know for a fact is something I've struggled with, I coach a lot of women, this is a very human experience. I think that was a perfect way to put it. But a lot of people struggle with this. And I love that, you know, that rephrase one of my favorite rephrases of the question, Who am I is, why not me? Why not me. And I love what you're saying with really taking the time to we are all of those things, but we have to create the space to find him within ourselves. And so that was really beautiful. I got chills over here listening to you say that. Okay, so the first thing, getting past the mindset of Who am I to do this and getting out of your own way? I love that. What was the second thing?

### **Ashley Wray**

Oh, I would say the things that there was things that were avoiding understanding, what are we avoiding, and for me, I was really avoiding finance, I was avoiding money, I was avoiding these things that were really triggering my limiting beliefs and understanding that Google has so much power behind it. I just need to ask for help and do some research and realize it's okay, if I actually don't know how to do this. It's okay. If I am not the best at balancing a p&l sheet. It's okay if I'm not the best at whatever it is, like, you know, for me the the other biggest hurdles around finances always, you know, in my experience talking to entrepreneurs is it's a block. But leadership is a really big block for me, too, is understanding what makes a good leader. And how do I show up as a good leader and I was super avoidant. Again, I would avoid finance. I didn't like it. But I would avoid difficult conversations. And as soon as I shifted it to, the sooner I have this conversation, this clarifying conversation, the closer I am to a solution that helped me shift the accountability men versus I have to have this conversation. And I have to be the angry boss and lead with fear. And for me, it was really just trying to understand what kind of leader do I want to be? How do I show up that way? And how do I lead with inspiration versus fear and be in an abundant mindset versus a scarcity mindset? And, you know, those are, those are all very big statements. But I mean, there was moments where I thought, my team, you know, at one point, I think they about 20 people on the team, and they'd all go for lunch and not invite me and

I thought, oh, but I think I'm a cool boss. I'm a cool person. And we're all the same age. And oftentimes, like, you know, I was maybe the younger person in the room and just thought, I don't want to be the boss, this is so low. So there is something kind of about shifting the perspective on what is a leader meant to be what kind of leader do I want to be. And that was, that was a really big one for me. And now I feel like I again, I haven't perfected it. But I'm really proud of how I lead my team. And I leave with a lot of space and a lot of trust. And it took me figuring out my values and what success meant to me to really understand how I want to lead.

### **Shannan Monson**

I love the way that you talked about that. Because a lot of these things were fearful or avoidance of like, fine, maybe it's finances for you, or leadership. They're also things that we're not taught, you know, you're a journalist, I don't know why I would have taken a finance class, right. And, like the same with leadership, you know, we put this pressure on ourselves to be a good leader, when there are skills that you need to be taught, you know, how to communicate, how to how to set boundaries, how to empower your team, how to cast a vision, like those are leadership skills that it No one's taught us. There's no reason for us to just naturally be good at them. And I think it's really interesting what you said, asking yourself, what am I avoiding? You know, it's kind like the elephant in the room. The thing that's keeping us in the next level a lot of times is the thing we don't want to look at, because it sounds hard. And I love that you just really took it head on and said hey, here's what I'm going to do. And here's how I'm going to make it better. Oh, this is such good advice. Ashley. Okay, what is the third thing? What's the third thing? So first, getting to that? Who am I? mindset second, figuring out what you're avoiding and really addressing it head on what is the third thing that's really allowed you to build a successful seven figure business,

### **Ashley Wray**

I would say understanding what success means to you. And really stepping into your version of it because I for years, so we did a co branded product launch with Lulu lemon across North America, and we were their first ever products. This is a few years ago. And it was so cool. And we our team grew, we became as cool company and we got this huge office space and I I would say, you know, as a green entrepreneur, it's probably what I would have had on my vision board of like a big brick loft open space, we get green juice and organic groceries delivered, puppies could come in, we'd have meditation teachers come in, we had like a lounge space. And I went, I hated it so deeply, because I don't want to be here at eight and leave at six. I don't want you guys have to look at how I'm dressed to like, really make the standard of how to show up to work. And I don't want to manage all of this pressure as a leader like all of these things I thought I wanted, I realized this was everybody else's version of success. And I as I was reflecting on that this was about four years ago, this happened. My girlfriend said, to come visit your office, I said, Great, come take a look. I love this space. I'm like, you can have it. I actually don't want it anymore. I want to go remote. And at this point, I had been living between like Bali in New York and Thailand and Vancouver. And so I have met a lot of remote workers. But I wouldn't say it was as popular gang as it is now. I'm sure super normalized now. And I said where you can have my office and she took the lease over. And within 30 days, we were remote. And what is so fantastic This is as soon as I made that decision was like it a bit woowoo. But as soon as I



announced the universe, as soon as I announced, this is what I want it all just it just came it just happened it you know, three girls, the team became pregnant and left on mat leave soon after, for the cross flying back to university and other rural women started business that like it was a natural attrition, that all of a sudden, the team had like lovingly and sweetly evaporated into their own beings and what they wanted to do and their own path, their own journey. We were remote. I didn't really have a plan. But again, I knew I could figure it out. And I went on this curiosity to her asking remote companies and meeting with CEOs. How did you keep culture and they all said we're all figuring it out as we go. I said, great. That's the permission, I need to also find out as I go, and we became remote. And you know, it's so funny in this lesson for me is, I remember when a date Around this time, and this guy looked at me I was telling them that we had just gone remote. And he said, Wow, that must be pretty embarrassing. Hey, is your business going under? Are you guys going? Are you? Are you struggling? And I thought no, I, but this is my version of success. I know. And obviously it triggered me because we'll talk about I think that it was it was me standing in a discovery of this is what my version of successes, my version of success is time. And that might not look successful to everybody. But I didn't care anymore. Because when I had what looked successful, I was deeply unhappy. And now you know, I'm talking to you from Guatemala, and my entire team is remote. And for four years, we've been remote, very much like starting meditation company, when people say now, how did you know that was going to be cool. People said, How did you know that remote work was where it was going. And I just said that it was me following my heart. And what I think is unique in that story is there's going to be so many people that try to shelter you or warn you because they love you like the amount of people that say that you're quitting your job because you met a hippie on a plane, like, are you sure. And you're gonna give up this beautiful office just so you can travel? Are you sure that's what you want, that doesn't sound good or look good. And it was me standing in my truth of business success to me. And if I really want an office, I can no sign a new lease. It's not permanent, unless I want it to be permanent. And I'm so grateful now that I followed that. And I find it and I'm so curious of your experience in this. But when I'm coaching, I don't just coach people in business don't just coach entrepreneurs, I also coach people in finding life alignment and discovering their values and understanding. What does success mean to me? And what is my purpose. And I think that those are reflections that are deeply uncomfortable, deeply spiritual, they take time, they take, you know, a lot of self reflection that a lot of people don't want to go through. I think that as soon as we figure out our values, as soon as we figure out what is success, we start to get closer to our purpose, we get closer to our potential and I mean, if it's not in line with somebody else's version of success, that's okay.

### **Shannan Monson**

This is a beautiful story. I mean, I'm just sitting over here nodding my head. The thing that's so interesting to me is your version of success was someone else's version of failure. And, and I think that's really powerful. Because if we look around trying to achieve everyone else's version of success, like you're looking around, this is not my this is not my, you know, this is not my vision board. That at the end of the day, we're going to be the ones that are unhappy and how beautiful that you were able to say hey, I you know, reject that statement about the business being a failure. This is actually my version of success and living in that truth. These are such beautiful stories. Thank you so much for sharing with us. I want to I want to pivot a little Hear,

you've talked a lot about these beads, the mala beads and your meditation pillows. I know all of this has roots in Hinduism and Buddhism. And I would love to hear you know more about how we, as you know, a big American audience, how we can respect the tradition and the culture as well, you know, adopting these practices into our lifestyle, and what we can do to use these beautiful products that are made by artisans, in Asia, while being really respectful of the culture that they come from.

### **Ashley Wray**

Beautiful, beautiful question, I think, what's also really important and I always share this, which I mean, maybe my sales team isn't pumped on me sharing this, you don't need our products to meditate, you actually don't need anything to meditate. You only need your breath, these products are beautiful, and they're made with these beautiful materials. And they're made with so much love. And as you mentioned, with these roots, and Buddhism and Hinduism, but roots in so many traditions in so many religions, you know, meditation isn't exclusive to Buddhism and Hinduism. It is it is meant to be shared. And if, if these pieces inspire you to sit and connect with yourself, that's why we've made them, but they're not necessary. And that's why we also create a lot of free meditations, you know, being you know, with my background in journalism, and educating people and creating content, for me, it was super important to be able to offer as much free content and support and education as we can. So that it really isn't just about an experience of buying a product, it's meant to be part of your evolution and part of your journey. And whatever it represents to you. You know, I know a lot of people wear them as jewelry. And that's, I'm not against that, like, I think that we often get asked, Are these gemstones going to heal my liver, or, you know, they'll have different meanings and qualities like Rose Quartz and open your heart chakra. The way I like to look at these pieces and honor them is if they come into your life, let's say you know what, I'm wearing them all on my wrist right now for patients? Is the gemstone brand new patients or is me looking down at my wrist and going Oh, yeah, my intention today is to practice patience. Therefore, I'm thinking about it more, I'm bringing it into my psyche and bring it into my aura and by energy and by field. Did the mala do that? Or am I doing that because this beautiful object has reminded me of that. So they are so sacred, and they do hold space for you. And they, they do guide you and they are traditionally tools. You know, to clarify, we did not invent these, we did not invent meditation cushions. We did not invent mala beads, you know, working with crystals and with malls and Christians, it's such an honor. And I'm so grateful. And it's been beautiful to see what they mean to different people throughout their journeys. Just you know the examples, a lot of people going to yoga, starting off with a workout and then realizing Oh, this actually quite a profound experience to bring me peace and mindfulness, reflection, maybe the mala you purchase, because oh, turquoise is such a beautiful gemstone. And then it speaks to in a different way of representing protection. And then maybe you start meditating with it. So I think I always hear different journeys and experiences that people have the products, I think it's really beautiful and really profound. And I'm grateful that we get to enter people's lives that way, because it is such a vulnerable entry point to be at an event or speak with people and share with them this gemstone means this and then just seeing them weep and realize, I need that I need that in my life. I'm yearning and craving that connection to that quality and myself. And so I mean, the beads can be used to represent whatever you need in that moment. And I think as long as you're honoring that with

that intention, and being in this place of integrity, and self seeking and self reflection, there's a lot of love and honor and that experience.

### **Shannan Monson**

And so beautiful to that it can mean different things to different people, you know, I am pretty a product that does meet people in their vulnerable moments. And I think that's really cool that it does different things to different people. I'd love to talk just briefly, you know, if you choose a path as an entrepreneur or an ambitious woman, or you're, you know, working being the CEO of your life, I think burnout is really common, especially after the year that we've all had. I feel like the whole world is collectively grieving burnout and being on 24 seven. So I'd love to hear from you as an expert. What would you recommend for our listeners starting right, right now today? How can they find more peace in their life and start a mindfulness or meditation practice? sitting at home listening right now?

### **Ashley Wray**

That's a great question. I'm gonna answer this in a few different ways, because I think there's so many approaches to this. So I hit burnout every year and it just happens like clockwork in November, and I get adrenal fatigue and I'm wiped and I went to the doctor, listen, maybe four years ago, and my doctor said you need to take a break and everyone's version of a break is different. I knew myself well enough. So if I went to Mexico and sat on the beach, that I would be on emails, or I'd be in a team or I would still be there, hovering and like kind of, you know, just hovering from a distance and lurking in slack. And so I had to reflect on what do I need to do for myself, that puts me in a position where I can't check email. And I knew that I wanted to be embodied, I knew I wanted to be in my body moving so that I wouldn't just be sitting because I knew I can't sit still. So I decided to go and hike in Himalayas, and my doctor was not impressed. recommendation was take a break. And I thought, This is my version of a break. Where is there no internet? And where can I find movement? And where can I be in nature with fresh air, that just happened to be a very extreme move on my behalf. I think I flew out the next week and bought all of my hiking gear like three days before in the mountains with to hang tags and all my clothes. And now, every year is my gift myself, since my partner and I like this is my marriage ended. My commitment to myself was every year I'm going to take myself on a journey, overseas alone, as uncomfortable as it is, and be in my body for seven days. So I go hiking every year. And I always dread it, I always delete up to it. I think, Oh my gosh, why am I doing this? What am I doing? I don't want to do this. And then as soon as I get into the mountain, there's no internet, I just wait. And I cry all day in joy, and in pain and sadness and healing and releasing. And it's the most beautiful, profound experience, but also very difficult. And I know for me, that's what I need. Now for me to let go and release and heal. I think that the movement practice is so important to so many people. And I've, I've heard a lot in this past year, I also want to acknowledge that not everybody needs to heal. Nor is that grateful to everybody. Right. You know, I mean, my move is a bit extreme. And I acknowledge that. And I think that there's so many beautiful ways that we can do this from home without you know, flying to Nepal. I, I've seen in the past year, so many people coming tamala that are in this place of anxiety of overwhelm of grieving as you mentioned, and feeling lost, and even when they sit down to meditate. Because the two things I hear I tell people I teach meditation and work meditation is I

know, I should meditate, but I'm really bad at it, or I tried it once and I was super bad. So I gave up. So it's the I know I should, which is such a guilty way to enter something. It's so this is this is where we keep it light. So if you want to start a practice, you know, here's a couple tips. To start it start by tying it to a habit you've already built. So if that means you brush your teeth every morning, which I hope you do, use that as your Okay, I'm gonna go meditate now or I turn on the coffee pot, I'm gonna go meditate. Now, building an entirely new habit that takes a lot of work, a lot of commitment, a lot of self discipline, a huge fan of self discipline, but we want this to be easy, I want this to be light, let this be accessible. So tying it to a habit that you've already built. Beautiful tip, the next thing is just start really small, it can be two minutes, your meditation practice does not need to be 20 minutes, it does not need to be 30 minutes. If you sit there and set a timer on your phone for two minutes, make sure that the timer that's on your phone is not the alarm to wake up to in the morning, it can be like an easy, gentle, beautiful sound, to maybe associate some joy with your practice, and just minutes. And then the next day, maybe it's three, and then maybe the following week, it's eight and you're gonna miss some days here and there. So that kind of leads into the third point is, don't lie to yourself. We are such creatures of nothing. And I noticed, you know, I mentioned that we do a lot of free content from Allah, we do a 21 day meditation series twice a year, I always noticed that people are committed for the first 5678 days, and then they fall off. And if they miss one day, they just don't come back. And it really is this self judgment of I've missed a day. I'm the worst meditator I knew I couldn't do this. I mean, if your friend was trying something for the first time I named Miss today, how would you talk to them, you would say, hey, you're doing great. It's okay. If you miss a day, just go back tomorrow. And we do not speak to ourselves that way. So that practice of self compassion is super important in meditation. Because sitting with ourselves isn't always this joyous, beautiful breakthrough. There are some days where, you know, stuff comes up that we don't want to see, which is why it's really hard to sit with ourselves. You know, I would encourage you to reflect on when was the last time I sat by myself for three minutes and didn't pick up my phone after 10 seconds of being alone. Like we are distracted, distracted. Because I think it's because we're avoiding whatever feelings that we're like shoving down like a beach ball inside of ourselves. And the more that we connect to ourselves and create that space, you know, the first few times it might be uncomfortable, and then it does eventually get to a place where you know, if you start out of guilt, maybe it'll shift into a place where you're called to and you're pulled to it and you're excited about it. And I always get asked cream typing people, when's it gonna kick in? When?

Yeah, I hear you. And I've been doing it for 10 years. And some days, I have profound days and some days, my entire meditation is I don't want to do this, you know, it's, it gets better. It's like going to the gym and you build this momentum. It's like anything that you You just need to put a bit of time and effort and commitment and show up for yourself. And it's, it gets easier. But you're not broken. If your mind wanders, your minds gonna wander, always, it always is gonna wander, and it's just not judging yourself for it.

### **Shannan Monson**

I love that just not going into it from a place of judgment, whether you do or you don't, there's no guilt associated with it. And I think that's really good advice for any new habit you're establishing in your life. So, Ashley, thank you so much for sharing your wisdom with us. Where can we find you online? where can our listeners go? Get some mala beads or join the free meditation practice? Tell us more about where to find you to continue on this journey?

### **Ashley Wray**

Yes, of course. Thank you. Well, you can check us out @MalaCollective. We're a small team and we read all of your messages and emails, and we love, love, love getting messages around meditation intention setting. And please reach out I love hearing from you. We also host a monthly meditation night, the last Thursday of every month. So whenever you're listening to this, it's still last Thursday of every month. And it's really meant to be an experience to ease people in. So you know, as I mentioned, through embodiment, and movement, you know, we didn't meditation practice recently, where we did a lot of movement, like a soft, gentle yoga practice, and then meditation. So we want it to be a bunch of different, like a variety of meditations. I'm a huge fan of gratitude. We did a gratitude practice one month, it's meant to be soft and gentle, and beautiful and easy. And so I would love it. If anybody wants a free ticket, please message me. And then you can find me @Ashley\_\_wray and Ashleywray.co. And, as I mentioned, I'm tapping into coaching and I love working with people, whether they're launching a business, scaling a business, but I've really loved helping people understand their values to find success, and stepping into purpose and truly finding that alignment and joy within the lives they've created. whether or not they're entrepreneurs, I think that the alignment and self love and believing and understanding and embodying that we are enough is is such an important beautiful experience. And for me was the most profound shift in my life. I'm so grateful to be able to work with people for them to find out with themselves.

### **Shannan Monson**

I completely agree. Thank you so much for sharing such beautiful stories and really mind provoking thoughts around just how we can really tune in and follow our curiosity and become more mindful. So thank you so much for coming on today's show. We will link website Instagram in the show notes below as well. Thank you so much for coming.

### **Ashley Wray**

Thank you so much for having me.

**Shannan Monson:** Thank you so much for listening. We hope you enjoy the show. Follow us at CEO school on Instagram for show notes, inspiration and exclusive behind the scenes that you won't find anywhere else. We also have an absolutely incredible resource for you. It's the seven lessons we learned building million dollar businesses. These are complete game changers and we want to give it to you absolutely free. All you have to do is leave a review of the podcast, why you love the show, screenshot the review and email it to Hello@ceoschoolpodcast.com and we'll send it your way.