

Corey McAuliffe Interview

Karen Wyatt:

Today I'm very happy to welcome my special guest, Dr. Corey McAuliffe. Corey is a researcher and author whose work spans mental health, disability, and the spaces where science meets lived experience. Born in Portland, Oregon, and now based in Vancouver, British Columbia, she brings more than two decades of public health expertise to deeply personal questions about grief, healing, and what it means to stay in relationship with those we've lost.

Her memoir, which we'll be discussing today, *23 Dates With My Dead Dad*, continues that exploration, tracing her relationship with her late father after his death in 2019, [00:02:00] the spiritual practice of presence and attention she created, and the synchronicities and signs he sends. The book weaves together her experiences with chronic illness, ancestral trauma, and a transformative trip to Ireland, and you can learn more at Corey's website, coreymcauliffe.com, and there'll be a link for the website in the show notes.

So Corey, welcome and thanks for joining me today.

Corey McAuliffe: Thank you. Thanks so much for having me. I appreciate it.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, I'm, I've been really excited to, to talk with you. I was, very interested in your memoir and your, entire journey with your father really. It was very fascinating. And I thought maybe before we s- start diving into some of it, first maybe we should talk about why the number 23 and why dates with your dead dad were significant.

if you just wanted to explain those from your backstory.

Corey McAuliffe: For sure. I appreciate it. [00:03:00] I will say At first I didn't know why 23. I started seeing the number incessantly probably, I started noticing that I was noticing it about two months after he died. I'm now more curious what, was it happening in those first two months and I was just walking right past it?

but it started coming in. I had a lot of people say, "Oh, that's like the new car effect. Like, when you want this car, you start seeing it everywhere you go." And I was like, "Yeah, multiply that by 23, and that's how I'm seeing this

number." And I started pointing it out to family and friends in ways where they'd even be like, "Whoa.

That, that's a lot." and to be honest, as I said, I, the 23 didn't mean anything to me. I didn't really understand why are you sending a 23. And so I will say that is the journey of the book, so I'm not gonna give away too much there- That's true. ... in terms of what 23 actually means. So if you do wanna know- Read the

Karen Wyatt: book.[00:04:00]

Corey McAuliffe: pick up the book. But I did decide, I will say in the beginning, I had thought it was gonna be, like, a really easy, maybe not a beach read, but maybe. Maybe for someone in grief who wants something a little bit lighter. And I'd go on 23 dates, and I would just catalog them. And the reason I went on dates was because when I was little, my dad used to take my sisters and I individually on a date every Saturday.

I think it was my mom's way of getting us all out of the house and not- ... running around. And so it was also our time to get to spend a, a one-on-one space, with my dad, who was otherwise working all week long. And so every third Saturday was mine. And we typically had the same routine, either of going downtown.

My dad loved to shop. He was a buyer for Nordstrom for a while. My mom hated to shop, so again, it was, like, the perfect excuse of, "Go make sure they have clothes for school," or, "Go make sure," when I was older, he'd help buy dresses for, dances I'd go to. [00:05:00] but yeah, it was a probably two to three-hour period of time where I just really got to spend with my dad and get to know him and, him to get to know me.

And so when these 23 started coming up, I had been trying to figure out a way to stay connected to my dad. I lived across two countries. I was in Canada at this point. I was in Toronto, so on the other side from Portland, Oregon. and so it didn't feel like my dad had never been there. We didn't have any shared spaces of oh, when he came, we went here.

And I couldn't really get a sense of like, how do I stay connected? what does this look like? Do I have to wait till I go back to Portland every single time? do I have to go visit him in the wall his ashes are in? do I go to the bar I really didn't like that he went to? Like, how do I do this?

And that's when, I, it just felt like kind of a, a pop in the head one day of [00:06:00] there's this 23, like maybe it could be a time or maybe it could be an actual like date of the month. And then all of a sudden I was like, oh my God, date. Date, And so on the 23rd of every month, I decided he and I would go on a date.

And when I first started that idea, I wasn't quite sure what those would look and they, began to manifest. I think I wanted them to be really important and special at the beginning, and they, were. And what I learned through the process though, was like that it wasn't what we were doing, but about the quality of time and connection.

And so as the world turned upside down with this little thing called the pandemic, and we were all relegated to our homes, all those big grand plans I had really shifted and I had to get creative with, how do I continue having this connection to this person, and how do I do that in times where I'm completely overwhelmed or underwater?[00:07:00]

and so yeah, that's where the 23 and the dates, are gra- grounded in.

Karen Wyatt: I just love the idea that, you carried on a tradition that was a, an important part of your childhood really with your dad, and very special. And you use that really as a grief ritual after he died. And I think that's so powerful, like for each one of us to think about with our loved ones, who have died, what is something special that helps us f- stay connected f- and remember the old stories and the, old memories that we still cherish, that we don't necessarily want to lose?

And I think that's was a really brilliant way to do that, and to set aside a special day every month for that.

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah. Yeah, I think, that's where sometimes the more simplified dates came in, is that the date could be as simple as like going to coffee because- [00:08:00] You and your person really loved that coffee shop, so you're gonna go to that coffee shop anyway.

maybe this time instead of grabbing it to go, you go and sit at the table where you both would have gone and sat. Or for me, my dad loved taco salad, so now it doesn't n- need to be on the 23rd. That was the other thing I, eventually needed to let go of, that maybe it's not on the 23rd, and that's okay.

That the same thing would happen as, I got older, where it'd be like he and I would figure out when it would work. And so that's what I'm able to do at this point, or later on as I was still moving through that grief period, is that- I felt like for me, I needed a little bit of rigidity in the beginning so that I would have a habit.

Because if I didn't set that date, if I didn't set kind of the expectation, the world gets so busy and it's so easy to let it pass. but then I needed to start noticing as our new, or not new relationship, but our, new form of our [00:09:00] relationship evolved, where I could start letting some of that rigidity go and have movement and recognize that as long as I invited him, he was still gonna show up.

And even sometimes when I didn't remember to invite him, he still, and he still does. I was just, on a trip visiting friends, and I have figured out my dad in, this new form loves a trip. We went on a little, like, cottage ship trip, and right as we're going out of town, the car in front of us has 323, which is when he really wants to get my attention, he'll add the 3 beginning and then 23.

And even when we finally, were leaving, I recognized my friend had borrowed a family member's car, and I'm looking at the license plate. I was like, oh, there's a 23 on the car I'm in. of course there is on that license plate. But he just kept showing up over and over. we got to the house and there was 23 seconds left on the microwave.

I was like, okay." you like a trip. Let's go on a trip. [00:10:00]

Karen Wyatt: I was thinking that it makes sense that in the earlier, stages of grief shortly after he died, it's maybe that more rigid scheduling is helpful 'cause you need a way to ground then and with all the chaotic emotions going on, and that it's really helpful.

But once you moved further on into the grieving process, you had more latitude and, you could, establish a different trend or different patterns. You didn't need that, the grounding as much anymore to get you through that. But I love that you use those days to just make space for your dad to connect with you, and you invited him to connect.

And I think for everyone grieving, that's a really important idea, is that we honestly have to stop and slow down. I th- I think for some of us, grief pushes us to stay really busy so we don't have to feel our feelings, that we start

occupying every moment and planning things so that we don't [00:11:00] have to sit with those feelings.

But then there's never a quiet moment when we could establish the connection with our loved one.

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah, I agree. I've had some people tell me, and they haven't said that's not fair, but it's this sense of why do you get to see your person so much? I don't." And often, either in conversation with them if they've invited that in, or just my reflection of it, is exactly what you just said.

Like I, I see him so much because I've, invited that space. I've slowed down. I've made time for relationship, and it's the same as with those who are still left here on Earth. If there's no time for them to even ask to go for a walk or grab coffee or have a meal with you, that's often where the relationship dies.

It's not because they don't want to be in it or that you don't. There's no invitation to the other. And my experience with spirit is that they're [00:12:00] always there, and like the minute you invite and you open the door, like, And again, it's not this like wave of oh my God, of course they're right here.

And for some people it is. Some people have that experience. Other people are like, where are they?" And it's again, okay, how have you foundationalized the ways that you're going to recognize them or that you're going to connect with them, and s- sometimes it's just about taking some quiet time with a journal.

or again, sitting with, a, a, tea or a coffee or whatever something special to them was, and sitting with your own sense of grief and how, would I like them to connect with me. How... And also, how do I not want them to connect with me? 'Cause I've had some people be like, that feels really scary.

I don't want them to just pop out." And I'm like, it's not quite like that." but I have had this sense that if I do not invite and open the door, it's not that they're not there, but that they're respecting my [00:13:00] boundary. Like it... I have a deep sense that there's a respective boundary that... 'Cause I've had some people say too, "I don't want a relationship anymore."

I'm like, "That can be totally made clear." And like you can put a boundary up that says I, like I'm good with this relationship and I'm done with it. I do think the one thing that's there though is that if you ever change your mind, it's not kinda like sometimes our Earthbound relationship where we burned a bridge and it's done.

Like that's not gonna be rebuilt. I think with those on the other side- But in my experience, they're s- they're fully healed. Like, getting to recognize and see my dad now as his full self is pretty incredible.

'cause that's not how he necessarily was in earth-bound form. And, then I have to remember, I'm still in earth-bound form.

So I still have some of those challenges in the ar- areas that I need to work on, and, I'm not fully healed yet, and, that's, that'll be my journey at some point. But, [00:14:00] that's my experience with it.

Karen Wyatt: That's a really interesting point, that we have a little bit of work to do in order to open up the space and welcome our loved ones in for the possibility of connecting with us.

And, so we have to dedicate a certain amount of time to that, and practice being present, just being still and quiet. And I was curious to know if you ever use automatic writing. Do you ever write to your dad and receive responses from him in writing?

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah,

Karen Wyatt: I have. I know you do from the book.

Yeah. But I just wanted you to talk about that.

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah, I appreciate it. Yeah. No, automatic writing was, a really great tool in a lot of different ways, 'cause I re- even remember, it's later on in the book so I won't spoil that part, but I remember someone saying, did you just ask?" And I was like, "What, what do you mean?"

And they're like, you have all these different ways that you communicate. have you ever just a- done automatic [00:15:00] writing and written to the person?" I was like, "Great, that is a skill I have." So I will say even with all these skills I have, it's funny how often I forget to utilize them. but yeah, through automatic writing, I've had some really beautiful conversations with my dad.

But it's even just as easy, if I wanna wish him a happy birthday, I can do that in many forms, and one of those ways is writing. And I know for some folks that I've had conversations with who are really struggling, that's often the first thing I suggest, is the automatic writing that, That you're able, whether it be to that person, to spirit, or to your higher self.

asking the question you wanna know and doing your best to turn off that thinking mind and just let it flow. I think it's pretty incredible the things that have come out on the paper. And when I have been asking either my dad or an ancestor something, I always find it so interesting the, tone [00:16:00] of the letter.

I'm like, "That's not mine." I don't write that way. I wouldn't say that to myself. I wouldn't even say it to a loved one of mine. I could hear a loved one, saying it to me maybe. although I do find it funny sometimes where I'm like, you got a whole different character up in this, f- full form.

I don't know that they would've said that to me here in their earthbound form." But, again, and I have people question me all the time, how do you know it's them?" And I'm like, "I just know it's a higher form." even if it's just my highest self, my ancestors are a part of me, so then it is a part of them.

even if it's my own deep down, I don't know, sub or unconscious, I, I'm, them and they are me, so it's still a part of them.

Karen Wyatt: Mm. That's so interesting. And, I'm curious to know, for you, did you have these, should, abilities, to sense the other side, an awareness of the [00:17:00] other side, before your father died?

And did they become heightened after you started connecting with him when he died?

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah. I think what's beautiful, and I always tell people, too, we all do. We all have these, and I have just been gifted the privilege of having a lot of folks that have a really heightened sense of this, fall into my pathway a few different times, where they've pointed things out to me that I was already doing.

And I think we use words like, "Oh, I have a gut feeling," or, I don't know, my family has a funny one of, "I have the best parking karma." And I'm like, actually, I think it's a deeper s- ... I watch us all do it," and I'm like, "Oh, we're actually slow..." I watch other people, why they don't get it, and I'm like, "Why?"

So there's a bit... It's funny, 'cause it's also... I think this is where the science and spirituality come together, is that in science we try to make sense- of how and why we know [00:18:00] things. and within the spirituality side, and I have these two parts of myself where my science side says, why?"

"Show me. How does it work?" And then my spirituality was like, "But we already know. Just, let it be. Trust it." what might that feel like instead of constantly having to prove to everybody else? And so I will say as a small child, I think I probably did. I notice some of the things I did, but I didn't have anyone around me to give me language for it- or to practice it. And no one was shutting it down. It just wasn't really... maybe it was shut down just because there wasn't a way to respond easefully to it. but it really started coming back up, I'd say... Actually, I, worked in global health for a decade, and I lived in a lot of very poor areas where I was living, even in dirt floors types of...

I was really living on the earth and with it, and with a whole lot less disruption of, whether it [00:19:00] be TVs or computers or these different things. And watching the way that they lived in community and, understood a lot of spiritual kind of components got me really curious, and I think started grounding and rooting it in myself.

And then when I came across these people who were able to point things out to me or help me explore things, that's where I would say I was able to turn my own volume up more. So when others say, "No, I don't have it at all," and I'm like, you just got really good at muting it." Like- it's still there.

but it also takes practice to turn it up. I don't easefully have all the different senses. I have a few of them very strongly, and the other ones, you know, they pop up now and again. But I would need to spend a lot of time, and it's not that I can't have them, I just don't know that I have the patience to work on those as much at this current moment.

Karen Wyatt: And then that speaks again to your decision to set aside special days to connect with your [00:20:00] dad. You were really honing your skills. Yeah. You were giving yourself and your dad a w- a place to practice- communicating together every month. And one thing that really struck me that I'd, love to talk about is the fact that it's not that you had a perfect relationship with your dad either while he was alive.

Because a lot of times I hear people say, "Unfortunately, my parent and I didn't get along well, and then they died, and now there's no way to ever fix any of that or reconcile anything." But that's not the experience that you've had. And so I'd, love for you to tell us more about that.

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah. I will say when I was small, my dad was my best friend, so I did have that foundational piece. And I do believe even if you don't have that, if you wished you had it, there's still space to make a decision and

create something new. but yeah, when I turned 21, and was able to start drinking, I [00:21:00] thought that was gonna be the best place 'cause my dad loved to be at the bar.

And, as a kid, I didn't really know that. It's really interesting kind of what gets hidden and what gets melded, and my mom was very protective of us and made sure, there was no alcohol in our house growing up. So when my parents were married up until I was about 12 or so- I, I, there was no drinking at our house.

I didn't know my dad went to the bar before he got back home. it was just that was my dad. That's who he is. And so at 21, when I decided, this will be a part of the relationship, too," it very quickly became evident to me, and I'll go back to that knowing, 'cause I can't tell you why. I c- he- nothing happened at the bar.

He didn't do anything bad. He didn't change really anything of who he was. But something opened in me of "Oh, I don't like this. I don't like the energy. I don't wanna be a part of this." and it became clear [00:22:00] really fast, and I remember my mom kind of being like, "Oh, finally someone else is noticing."

And, yeah. I ended up at a v- very, within that first year, telling my dad that I thought he had a problem with alcohol, and him denying it, me asking for it to not be a part of our relationship, and then witnessing for the next year him trying to attend to that, but also, if we were in group situations, all of a sudden it didn't matter.

We weren't one-on-one. He could go back to drinking, and I was like, "Okay, this is an interesting for a man who has stated, 'I can stop whenever I want to.'"

and then it was kind like, "Okay, if you can, and I've asked you, then..." And again, I'm 21. "Why aren't you doing it for me?" And so again, I hadn't learned much about alcoholism and those impacts.

And so yeah. Thankfully, again, I was [00:23:00] able to realize this is not healthy for a relationship, and I'm not the parent, and it's not my responsibility to make him stop, and it's not gonna work. let go of that. but it continued to be something- That was a struggle for us. I will also say the incredible thing about my dad is he had unconditional love for his daughters and his, grandchildren.

And so even with a bit of a crevice in our relationship, there was never a time period where I felt like w- it had broken and we weren't talking or that we, that he didn't still deeply love me, and it was true that I still deeply loved him. But it

was difficult, and it really ended, I... It w- is what killed him in the end, I feel like.

there were lots of different components, but all rooted in that. But I think it also helped me to start to realize, and to learn more [00:24:00] about, like, why that was taking place and to have empathy and compassion. I think a lot of that came... I wish it had come earlier. It was starting to formulate as I got my master's in public health, while he was still alive and starting to de- more deeply understand how addictions happen and that, we've tended to treat them very much as, "Why don't you just stop?"

like I was doing. and that's not how they work, and they're a disease, and we wouldn't say that to someone with cancer. "Why don't you just stop having cancer?" and so there's still, I think there's still unwinding I've gotta do around it because it's so embedded into our culture. And yeah, that's a piece of the work I continue to do, within that space of, I, I think our relationship's in a much better place at this point 'cause I know he's healed and he doesn't need that. but and also, again, that's the work I [00:25:00] still get to do while I'm here. and I know he's there, and his ancestors are there to support me whenever I ask them for help or compassion or love within what I'm trying to heal.

Karen Wyatt: And so there has to be... it has to be very redemptive to be able to relate to your father now in this spiritual way, and to recognize that he's different, that he has healed, and to see his, pure form, in a sense.

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah. I think it gives a lot more space for him. I know he tried to show up in every possible way he could.

There just wasn't enough space for him to be able to a lot of the time. He, didn't have the energy or the abilities or even, physical abilities because of what the addiction was doing and how it was destroying, slowly, his body. And I know there are moments that- I [00:26:00] really think he was quite concerned for me and wanted to do anything he could, and so the most he could do was call me every day.

And he did. He called me every day to check in, but he couldn't show up and physically be there with me. And so I just feel now I don't know, even in tests that I go into, like that other, if I have an MRI and no one can go in with me, like my dad can show up and be there with me where no one else is allowed in.

and I see him doing that in lots of different ways that my health journey has really led me all over the world. And again, while I have a, a incredible mother

too who does physically go with me and has, there's times too where it's like, "No, I think I'm good on my own 'cause I'm not by myself."

Like he's here, my other ancestors are here. Like anything I need from them, like, like I'm g- I'm gonna be okay. they're right there with me [00:27:00] too.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, and so in your spiritual awareness, you are fully supported by your father, by your ancestors, and you can receive- not only guidance, but also love it seems from that realm.

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah, for sure. Yeah. It's a, a beautiful piece that like, yeah, even if you just need a hug, sometimes it's about sitting down and leaning back into it,

Karen Wyatt: Yeah. I'm wondering if you have suggestions f- say for someone listening who has had a loved one die- who would love to reconnect in a sense now with that person, but doesn't know where to begin or how do you do it?

How do you start? what would you, tell them?

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah. Yeah, I can see where it feels really overwhelming for lots of people, and what I would say is start in the easiest way possible. don't make it some big huge thing where you need them to show up in this way. [00:28:00] although I will say a friend of mine, was telling me about her sister who was dying of cancer, and funny enough, she had said to her, "How are you gonna show up?"

And they picked, the number 333. and and that's how she shows up now. So even if you, if, someone hasn't died yet, I thought it was so interesting. That wasn't my experience with my dad to set something up pre, but apparently it works pre or post. but just paying attention, again, creating space and paying attention, like is there something you're seeing on repeat?

Is there something... I- I've also heard people say you can ask for things and then wait for them to come. so that's a way. I see a- I originally saw a lot of my ancestors through animals, and so I notice when certain types of animals show up, I'm always "Oh, hi Grandma. How's it going?" so it could be that.

It could be as simple [00:29:00] as remembering, something you loved doing together. So again, it doesn't have to be this physical sense of this, like maybe you loved going to, I don't know, basketball games together, or you loved going

to the park on Saturday with your dog, or you loved, again, grabbing that cup of tea or coffee at the local coffee shop.

or as simple as making their favorite dinner and at that moment taking a moment. I remember in one of my dates, I'm not sure if it's in the book, I don't think it is actually, I went to a friend's house and I didn't have anyone else to celebrate Thanksgiving with, and I just asked "Could we set another place setting for my dad?

Like I'd really like for it to just be there." And again, it's an honoring and it's a memory. And right there you have already invited them in. again, the automatic writing is a way. If you're someone who likes to write things out more, you could write... You don't even have to write a letter to them. You can literally ask a [00:30:00] question of "What would you like me to know?

I really miss you." Could you write me a short note? it can be so simple as to whatever it is, or you might have a question for them. "I really wish I had asked you this before you died." and then let whatever comes through, and again, trying to turn off your thinking brain of what you think they would've said to you.

that can be a really easy and beautiful way, too. Again, keeping it really simple, look at photographs. what does that bring up? And then sitting with that, too. as you notice what comes up, what thought maybe bubbles up? I don't know, maybe you see a swimming pool where you're like, "I'm gonna go swimming tomorrow."

Like that, that's what we were doing there. Or, "Oh my gosh, I haven't been to that lake since I was three, and it's only an hour away. Okay, next long weekend that's what we're gonna do." And, again, I'm gonna do it solo, [00:31:00] or I'm gonna do it with my sibling or my child, or, my... whoever, their best friend.

and again, whoever this is to you. I know it's my dad, but this could be your best friend. It could be... It can even be your pet. Again, so if it's a pet that was dear to you, oh my God, they loved being in this field with all the other dogs. Just go walk with your coffee and sit with other dogs.

you don't have to have a dog to go to the dog park. or going to their favorite... walking by their favorite places 'cause you know they had little treats. and then, and again, just walking into that space and noticing what comes up.

And then not judging it either. That's the hard one, of like just letting and noticing and letting that be.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, I love that you talked about the thinking brain, because I think that is sometimes the obstacle. I hear people say this all the time, "I really want [00:32:00] my son to send me a sign, but honestly, I don't believe it's possible." Oh. My... So the thinking brain is arguing the entire time, "No, That would never work.

That would never work." And then signs might be being sent, but they are missed. And, when you were just talking about the swimming pool, I just remembered that one day I drove past... I saw a sign for a Hot Springs. It was advertising a Hot Springs pool, and I suddenly had this memory of how much my dad loved to go to Hot Springs, and I knew like- I, I have to go there.

And whether, whether that was, my dad sending me that sign, or was it just my own intuition saying this would be healing to go to that hot springs and soak and think about Dad, and I did it. I went there, and it was profound. It was amazing. And so that's what I would encourage people is to, you don't have to know the answer in the moment.

suspend your [00:33:00] thinking brain and say, "Yeah, maybe it's only coming from me. Maybe I'm making it up. Maybe it isn't, but I'm gonna follow it anyway." Yeah. "I'm gonna do it anyway. I'm gonna go to the hot springs 'cause I just wanna see what happens," and ...

Corey McAuliffe: and I tell people all the time, they'll say, what if you're just making it all up?"

And I'll say, then I just had a really fun life." the way that, it brings so much joy, what, why would that be a problem? it only has made my life better. I'm not doing anything that brings harm to me. It brings joy and, like you said, healing. whether it was him sending it or not, again, and that's where I'll go back to, you're part of him.

even if it's you doing it, how is it not still part of him?

Karen Wyatt: And how could I ever even separate that out really? Yeah. Yeah. And so at some point y- you stop needing to know. You stop needing the certainty of it because that's where it's our [00:34:00] rational, rationally based society and how most people think.

It gets us in trouble 'cause it causes us to just shut down our own intuition and our own spiritual awareness and just cut that off, and I think a lot of people are suffering because of that.

Corey McAuliffe: And I, that's a really great point you're making because one of the things I think I've learned- And I think I'm at a better place where I can still be around these people, but in the beginning I stopped sharing that information with those people.

So if you've got people that are doing that to you where you really wanna explore this, I would actually say as a safety mechanism, don't share with them. if that's gonna be the pushback you receive from them o- over and over again. I'm now at a place that I'm so comfortable, I've written a book, I'm outed, everyone knows that I t- I talk and write with spirit, that I don't really care if someone pushes back at me.

I'll go deep into it with [00:35:00] them and go toe-to-toe. But I don't know that I would've felt that way when I was first starting to dip my toes in and kinda figure it out and, I danced and got to practice that a bit with my own, some of my own family members. And it wasn't that they were pushing back to tell me I was wrong, it was more this, prove it to me."

very critical stance of "I'm not saying you're lying, but how are you going to prove this thing to me?" Which is a really special dance because I am a social scientist. I do like proving things. and yet There are just some times where I just know things, and, I'm learning now too to push back and say, why do I have to prove it in this one way?"

Like, why can't this experience be proof enough for me? And like, why do you need to know, what I think or what I feel is, quote-unquote big T truth when I love the little t truth? it doesn't need to be your big T truth. you [00:36:00] don't need to believe me. It's not gonna help me or hurt me in any way for you to believe that this thing is happening to me.

What I do need you to do is let me have my experience with it, and I don't need you to, And so if there was someone still like that in my life, I think I've just called all of them out at this point. They do exist. So if you do have someone like that, and I think I do have extended family like that where I think I've heard titters about, my book or through, someone else of, "Did you hear And I'm like, I don't actually really have an interest in, what the- what they're going to critique me about." that doesn't really fulfill me or offer me anything, and I will always leave the door cracked open if they... Or, if they wanna come knock, I

will always open that door to the conversation, but if that knock is to come, burn my house down, no thank you.

you're not welcome in this conversation, in this space until, you do some of your own healing work. Again, because I'm not trying to [00:37:00] prove to you that I'm right and you're wrong. and I think that's where sometimes the defensiveness comes in, is that someone thinks you're trying to push it on them and they have to believe you.

So I would also say I had to catch myself in that in the early stages too, of stop trying to proselytize, that this is the way. It's more of an invitation of hearing my story, my lived experience, and then you get to do with it what you'd like to do.

Karen Wyatt: Exactly, which was the whole, really the whole premise, I had for choosing your book for the reading group- A Year of Reading Dangerously. Like- Read the book and see what you think. May draw your own conclusions, see what you think. And for our conversation here, that it isn't to push anyone else to think a certain way, but sometimes we need to challenge assumptions that we, might be carrying and holding that are actually to our own detriment.

And you've been in the field of public health, and [00:38:00] me in healthcare as well, and I see it as one of the deficits in a way, here in the US in particular in our healthcare system, that we don't allow for the mystery. And healthcare, healing, illness, it's just rife with mystery and things we don't fully understand and we can't explain, and then medicine tries to write off anything that, that doesn't fit, a, a scientific study.

And so many people are experiencing things that can't be explained, and if we could only allow that and embrace that, we would be so much better off.

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah. I think you point to something that I've heard this before, people saying it's Canada as well. It's the US, Canada, and lots of other industrialized countries.

it, feels less like healthcare and more like sick care. let me like heal this thing that you have rather than- [00:39:00] Like me, it's in the book, but I, have multiple sclerosis and, I'm coming to the place of like I've... I'm just someone who likes to like fix and heal, and that's part of my personality, and I'm learning that maybe with my condition, health has nothing to do with me healing it, and it has everything to do with my mindset.

to be quite honest, I'm incredibly healthy, and and vibrant, and people are always like, "You don't look sick." I'm like, welcome to invisible disability." And the fact is though, 95% of the time, like no, I'm not. my scans may say something different, they may look different, and there may be moments where I go, "Oh, okay, this..."

everything just turned around upside down. What was going on there? Let's do a recall of what did we learn in this moment?" To then try to make shifts and changes to do better. And it was the same when I had my first health condition. I would be [00:40:00] "What did you do? What did you eat? What happened?"

And then it was an arthritic condition, and all of a sudden the next day we'd have thunderstorms, and I'd be like, "You did nothing. You literally just can tell the barometric pressure in your joints." But we get in this like twist and turn of we have to know why and what, and how do we fix it, and what did you do?

And that was constantly my like internal consideration. What did you do to yourself? Why are you sick again? And the truth is, what if... this is pushing it, 'cause in my book, there's a lot of me trying to make sense of my health, and I don't think any of that's wrong, but as I've continued to progress, my question also is, what if there is no meaning behind it?

What if it just is? And like what if I really do learn to actually surrender to let it just be what it is? And again, I don't take away any of the lessons I learned. I think they're all brilliant and rooted in my own healing and my [00:41:00] growth, and it's not that they're incorrect or correct. And also, this like why me type situation, like I just look around at everyone else and I'm always like, "I'm kinda glad I have the thing I have," because I don't know, it feels also like I chose this coming in, that this was, it's the way I don't be a victim around it either, that this is my healing path. These are the lessons I've chosen to learn in this lifetime. And that, again, when I look around, I can't find a single person that isn't, you know, quote-unquote, "suffering from something," where they're being really challenged in some way.

And so we each carry our own thing, and then it's how we choose to show up in that thing. And I also have other friends where I'm like, "Oh my gosh, if one of those 10 things happened, like most people would be flat out." And yet... And I was talking to this one friend that it had happened to, and they said, "Yeah, it was the world's way of like offering me lesson again and again till I finally [00:42:00] heard it."

And that's my own experience too. I think I'm only gonna continue with autoimmunes until I learn the lesson that they're offering of, hey," "how about a little bit of surrender and just being with and stop trying to fix everything, stop trying to make it all go away, and just be with it."

Oy.

Karen Wyatt: That's a rough lesson.

Corey McAuliffe: I think it's a life one, this one. I'm not sure

Karen Wyatt: it's a- I think you're right. but one thing that I feel certain from reading your book is that you're not alone on your path, also because you found comfort and guidance from your ancestors and your father, and that no matter what path we're on, I think there's- There is comfort there for us.

We don't have to be alone. And I- that's what I think the continuing bonds theory of grief is all about, is that don't believe anyone who tells you someone died and so now you will never have a relationship [00:43:00] or connect to them again. That doesn't have to be true at all, and your experience demonstrates that.

Corey McAuliffe: Yeah. I also think, it's not that it doesn't have to be true, it's not true. the- we don't just disappear completely once... we're not physically there, but all of our cells and atoms, we're all each other. it just, it keeps going round and round. So even if the person, doesn't have any kids or kin or anything like that, it's like, their genes are completely gone.

no, that's not true, 'cause they split off somewhere, and they're still in, somebody else. And when they die, they... And not even when they die. We're not in the same space, so this won't be true for you and I, but when we are in the same space with someone else, we are literally exchanging cells. We are them, they are us.

And so in those ways, if we wanna get really scientific about it, they're never gone. they're just part of this bigger atmosphere, and way in which we exchange with each other all sorts of [00:44:00] things, and that's getting at the cellular level. But let's talk about their ideas and the ways they spoke or the things they left.

And it flows both ways. that also is harm and good things. So you might be like, they were so violent with their words," and all of that. And yes, that may be what they left, but that might be the opportunity for healing.

and that might be your opportunity in that way of "But I still hear them, gripping at me."

Okay, that's now yours. Which unfortunately, I don't want anyone to have to go through that. And yet, if we don't wanna sit in being a victim, because that's where we could sit of I didn't do it, they did it to me-" Yes, and at this point it's now your choice. do you want to keep carrying it with you, or do you want to do the healing work?

And, we all get those opportunities. it's never a one-way street. and hopefully we also get some of the really beautiful mentors or, even coaches or teachers [00:45:00] or healthcare providers that give us so much healing, and I have been ripe with those in my life. And so I try to embody all those things I've learned from them, and whether even just be from a book.

I might not actually physically know the person that has taught me a lot, but if I can then put that back out into the world, that's part of the healing work of trying to, talk about opportunities with social media out there and things like that. In the news, it's like a constant barrage of the negative.

can I barrage all the good things and try to, even it out a little bit, but.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, exactly. I do, I want to encourage everyone to read your book, 23 Dates with My Dead Dad, but Corey, also to go to your website, coreymcauliffe.com. And what can people find on your website?

Corey McAuliffe: It's a website all about me right now.

there's a bit about my book. I would love for you to sign up for the newsletter if you found any [00:46:00] of this helpful or interesting. It's just month o- once a month. It's very simple. But there'll be links like this, podcast, or the videos from it. I also usually share one of the special 23s that shows up within that month or a previous one that's happened that's really significant to me.

and it's just a way to keep in touch and to learn a little bit more and to hear what's going on. it talks a little bit about my background in public health and some of the other media pieces that I've been a part of and the work that I'm

doing in the world. It's also the place that if you want to connect with me, you can find ways to follow on Instagram or even just send me a quick email.

I read every single one and love hearing the incredible stories that you all, many have already shared with me about their experiences of what's happened in their own relationships, since reading my book, so I'd love to connect. Oh,

Karen Wyatt: that, that's really wonderful. And I just, I [00:47:00] appreciate you having the courage to write the book and sharing all of your story, and then joining me today so that we could talk all about it.

Corey McAuliffe: I so appreciate the work you're putting out into the world and the way you're capturing these stories. They're incredible, and talk about barraging the world with all the good. I'm thankful for you and the work you're doing.

Karen Wyatt: Thank you. Thank you. We're trying. We're trying to get those positive- Yeah

messages out there.

Corey McAuliffe: For sure.