Announcer: This isn’t your average business podcast and he’s not your average host. This is the James Altucher Show on the Stansberry Radio Network.

James Altucher: This is James Altucher at a very special James Altucher Show. I have with me Arianna Huffington, Editor-in-Chief of the Huffington Post.

Hello, Arianna. How are you doing?

Arianna Huffington: Great to be with you, James. Thank you.

James Altucher: And, Arianna, I’m really psyched that your book, Thrive, is number one on the New York Time’s Best Seller List this week. Are you – is that something that, like, do you feel like your item on your bucket list has been ticked off?

Arianna Huffington: No. What I feel is that it’s an indication of the global shift that’s happening, that people are really experiencing this collective longing to stop living in the shadows, to stop destroying our lives through burn out and exhaustion, and pursuing success the way the world has defined it, which has not worked, really, for millions of people.

James Altucher: Not only has it not worked, but I feel the uncertainty, the economic uncertainty in the world has only increased, particularly since 2008. So many people have lost their jobs or become under employed that there’s so much more stress in the world right now.

Arianna Huffington: Yes. Absolutely. And also, there’s so much more stress because of the way we have identified success, success just with money and power. And a lot of people are missing out on their lives or even just defining ourselves and who we are with our jobs, and we see, you know, the impact this has. We see how many people are depressed, addicted, dealing with a lot of the diseases that come with stress, like diabetes, or high blood pressure, or heart disease. So we’re looking at all these casualties and I think there’s been a collective enough and that’s what I’m experiencing going around the country and talking to people.

James Altucher: I agree. And you know, of course, the elephant in the room here is that you’re incredibly successful in the traditional way that people define success. And I’ll just say –
Arianna Huffington: Yeah.

James Altucher: The traditional way that people define success is by money and career, and throughout your life you’ve been very successful, but I want to read the very first line of your book. It’s funny, because I often give people advice – when they ask me about writing I often give people the advice they should believe in the first line. And I only mean it metaphorically, but you actually do believe in the first line, so I’m going to read it right now. You start off, “On the morning of April 6, 2007 I was lying on the floor of my home office in a pool of blood.” That’s – I’m laughing, you know, even though you were in a pool of blood, but that’s a great first line. How can you not continue after that line? I have to find out why Arianna Huffington was lying in a pool of her own blood.

So what happened? How did you end up there?

Arianna Huffington: So, what happened is that it was two years and after we launched the Huffington Post and I was working 18-hour days. I had two daughters, one of whom was going through a college, still with me to decide what colleges she wanted to apply to. And I returned home completely exhausted and I fainted, hit my head on my desk, broke my cheekbone, got four stitches in my right eye. And as I came to in the pool of my own blood I started asking myself this question: Is this really what success is? Because by conventional definitions of success, as you said, I was successful, but by any sane definition of success, if you are lying in a pool of blood on the floor of your office you are not successful.

James Altucher: I would agree with that. And so it seems like as you were coming out of this you sort of re-defined what successful is and, as you call it in the book, you call it you decide to go for the third metric, which you define as pursuing, you know, well being, wisdom, wonder, and giving. So, well being, I agree with you very much on all four of these factors; I think these are all four things that people greatly ignore, but there’s one thing in well being that you give scientific research and it’s very interesting about sleeping.

I think people think that they’re superstars if they can get away with four or five hours of sleep a night and then be super productive. But I myself sleep nine or ten hours a night, like I love to sleep, and it was so refreshing to see that in your book. So what’s the story with sleep and do you sleep more now than you did then?

Arianna Huffington: Well, first of all, I’m very impressed. You’re definitely a pioneer and –

James Altucher: I am. I’m a sleep pioneer.
Arianna Huffington: And I love it especially because you’re a man, and you’re young, and you’re an entrepreneur, and you are saying that how much you are sleeping, which is actually very much what star athletes are also saying. Because what is interesting is that athletes are ahead of business people when it comes to recognizing the importance of introducing renewal and regeneration into our daily lives.

So I went from four to five hours to seven to eight hours and that was like the one big habit that I changed first. Now, I didn’t go immediately from four to five to seven to eight. That’s why in the book I recommend small, baby steps. You know, I start, as you know, at the end of each section. I have three little steps, three little changes you can make in our lives that will be transformational instead of immediately assuming we’re going to change everything all at once, which isn’t going to work, right?

James Altucher: Right. I think people need that kind of tiny habits approach.

Arianna Huffington: So I recommend, you know, adding thirty minutes of sleep to your day, just thirty minutes. Everybody can do that. It will mean saying no to some things. It will mean not watching Jon Stewart. You can DVR it. And the benefit that we get waking up feeling so much more alert and able to face whatever life brings us, and what is amazing is that the science now is incontrovertible. That’s why this is such an exciting moment, because we have the scientific evidence to back up the ancient wisdom that was known about and we now have science that shows that sleep is like a dishwasher. It cleans up the accumulated waste of the day between our brain cells, and it increases mental clarity, and it prevents Alzheimer’s. You know, it’s like a miracle drug.

James Altucher: It really is. You mention a miracle drug, but it does actually release endorphins into the body, which helps you have more energy, helps you to be happier. You know, as you point out, the only benefit of not sleeping is it induces, so called, magical thinking, which is not necessarily a good thing; like sleep helps in every other area of life.

Arianna Huffington: Yes. If you want to be a fortune teller, perhaps don’t sleep.

James Altucher: Well, okay. Another one that I’m really interested in is wonder. Like I think so many people get involved in their daily routine that the anxieties that are sort of buried into each step of that routine start to build up. They lose their sense of wonder in life, because they never make any changes to that routine. Like how do you capture a sense of wonder in your life right now? You have such a – so many interesting things you do, I’m sure. How do you find the sense of wonder in it all?
Arianna Huffington: So for me, the key thing has been to stop multi-tasking. I speak as somebody who was like an obsessive multi-tasker. I really believed that that was the way for me to be most productive, so until I made these changes in my life I really cannot remember of a time when I would, say, get dressed or put my make-up on or take it off and not be on the phone to someone in my office or someone in my business that I was working with. Now that I am actually just present, doing what I’m doing, A, it’s eliminated a lot of stress, because again, scientific evidence, multi-tasking is an incredibly stressful thing and it doesn’t work. It’s actually task switching. So learning all that has been – has made a big difference in my life and it’s brought joy into my life and that’s something, which I want to do, as I go around the country speaking about Thrive and the message, you know, one of the things I want to do is to bring joy back into our daily lives, because it’s almost as though we’ve told ourselves that we can – we’re going to be effective and productive and, hey, you know, we’ll be joyful over the weekend or when we retire or when we go on vacation. Then we miss life and we miss the moment, as my mother, to whom the book is dedicated, who lived a third metric life before I knew what it was. She would say to my sister and me, “Don’t miss the moment.”

James Altucher: Well, you know, it’s – so as you started applying this, were you doing this while you were still at or before the Huffington Post got sold? Did you find yourself get more productive and the Huffington Post get more successful as you were starting to apply this in your life?

Arianna Huffington: Absolutely. I mean I can point out directly the decisions I made and that were because I was clearer, I was more connected to my own intuition and wisdom. I was better at seeing red flags, not hiring the wrong people. It was dramatically different.

James Altucher: What’s like a specific thing that happened that you noticed was directly related to this change?

Arianna Huffington: Let me give you one example, which is that the Huffington Post now is in 11 countries. Three years ago we were just in the United States. I was very clear that we had to become global and I came up with this idea of doing it as partnerships in order to be able to move fast. So all our international expansion is as commercial partnerships or JVs with a major media partner, like in France, in Spain, in Japan.

So, this was a simple idea that has meant that we can grow very fast without a very large investment and be a global media company with journalists all around the world, which are these international additions are also acting like international bureaus for our international coverage. Out of our 95 UVs, which is where we are right now, 44 percent are outside the United States. So that’s one idea basically –
James Altucher: And you attribute this to kind of having this newer intuition or better intuition that developed?

Arianna Huffington: Yes. Exactly. And you know, because I think for me leadership is about two things. One, is seeing the icebergs before they hit the Titanic; and the other is seeing the opportunities. I think in both cases I have been more effective than ever before. I think the teams that we have here at the Huffington Post, including my leadership team are actually practicing a lot of these principles. You know, we care for each other. We make sure everybody has enough time to recharge and take vacations. We are very flexible with people who, say, want to move part-time, because they’re dealing with something difficult at home, or because they just had a new baby or whatever. So all those things of flexibility, teamwork, treating people like human beings, not just resources has made a big difference in the culture of Huff Post.

James Altucher: Now, also in the chapter, Wonder, you talk a lot about death and it’s interesting, because death, obviously, is a huge thing people learn from, because we obviously all have to face it. We’re obviously all scared of it, and it’s how we deal with that fear and how we deal with the deaths of the people we love and learn from it that helps us ourselves deal with death. But what were you referring to when you kind of talk about death in the Wonder chapter?

Arianna Huffington: Well, I feel that, as Socrates said, “We need to practice death daily.” Now, not in a morbid sense, but because as The Onion headline put it, “Death Rate Holds Steady At 100 Percent.”

James Altucher: Right. I love that.

Arianna Huffington: So death is really what helps us put everything in our life in perspective and I feel that when we integrate it in our lives, as the Romans used to carve MM, Momento Morre, remember death, on the statues and trees; when we do that, first of all, we are more likely to tap into the mystery and the wonder of life, because we connect with a part of us that is eternal, which I believe that there is such a part, our soul.

Now, if somebody doesn’t believe that you can still be what Reid Hoffman, I was just seeing him last Thursday when I was at LinkedIn, the Founder of LinkedIn. He said – he called, he said to me, “I’m a mystical atheist.” So I think there are a lot of people, who are atheists, but at the same time, they have a sense of the mystery of the universe. They have a sense of the mystical nature of the universe. I think when we remember death we are more likely to connect with that part of life.
James Altucher: You know, it’s not even mystical, because as you’re getting, let’s say, closer to death. Let’s say a doctor told you, “Oh, you have so many months to live,” you’re going to start to think, “Oh, my gosh! I’ve got to make sure every moment is special.”

Now, the scary thing is that most of the time no doctor tells us that, but we have no idea when we’re going to die. Every single thing you and I do today is somebody else died doing that at some point in human history. So death is always close, but we try to put it off a little bit and I think having that appreciation that death could be always right around the corner makes us think that, “Okay, well, I’m not going to argue with my wife today or my kids today, because I could die today, so I have to treat this as a special moment and something sacred.”

Arianna Huffington: I love that. I think it’s such a poignant and powerful way to live and I have this section, as you know, in the book about our eulogies, because I was very struck when I was at a friend’s memorial by how our eulogies have nothing to do with our regiments, because they increased market share by one-third or made senior vice-president at 35.

It’s all of the other things that are mentioned in our eulogies, you know, how we made people feel and what made us love, you know, our small kindnesses, life-long passions. I just love to remember that, because we have 30,000 hours to play the game of life if we’re lucky and how we play it will depend on what we value.

James Altucher: And you bring this up in the chapter, Wisdom, that holding onto things like resentments or regrets, like I love this one quote you have from Carrie Fisher, “Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.” Like, resentment just never works out and yet, people all along, you know, every day just – it’s the negative chatter in their heads while they’re running around their day. They resent this, or they’re afraid of this, or they’re anxious about this, but you know, that’s not treating the moment as sacred and they’re going to end up – in a weird way they’re going to end up being less successful, because they’re so bogged down in all these things that won’t show up in the eulogy. Like, nobody will ever list your regrets in your eulogy.

Arianna Huffington: Absolutely. I think that this is a great way of putting it, that holding grudges, resentments, is just one of the ways in which we miss out on life. Now, that doesn’t mean we are not going to get angry. We are not going to get upset. It’s the clinging to that that is where the pain comes from.

I love watching children. They’re kind of my role model in how to deal with life, because they get upset if you tell them they have to go to sleep or they can’t have that ice-cream. And then literally, two minutes later,
they’re smiling. They’re moving onto the next thing and it’s as though nothing has happened. There is no remnant and that’s –

James Altucher: Right. Well, here’s an interesting statistic about children as opposed to adults: So the average number of times a child laughs per day is 300. The average number of times an adult laughs per day is five. Somewhere between childhood and adulthood it’s almost like we’ve lost the ability to laugh and laughter, just like sleeping, also releases endorphins and oxytocin and all these great brain chemicals that give us energy and happiness.

Arianna Huffington: That’s beautiful. I’m going to use that statistic from now on. I love it.

James Altucher: Feel free. Steal anything from me. It’s yours.

Arianna Huffington: Thank you.

James Altucher: And then on the third metric, as well, is giving. I think this is also something people feel like, okay, after I have a lot of money I’m going to start giving. They don’t realize how even small amounts of giving can be integrated into life and not just money, but giving of our time or even of our thoughts.

Arianna Huffington: Yes. Well, I think, let’s start with the science, because the science is amazing here, you know? We see this research that has been done at the University of North Carolina that shows that our genes are wired for giving. I mean for giving, not forgiving.

James Altucher: Right.

Arianna Huffington: By which I mean that when we – when the happiness we experience is because we are giving to others, the inflammatory markers that are the precursors of disease go down; and when our happiness is based just on self-gratification they go up. Now, life is, of course, a mixture of both, but it just shows the difference that giving does to our own happiness and our own health. Giving is really a shortcut to happiness.

James Altucher: Yeah. I agree with that. I think it’s extremely important and it makes evolutionary sense, because if you think about it, who survived? What gene survived? It’s the people who helped each other in the tribe that were able to then, you know, mate and replicate their DNA. The people who weren’t very helpful, they were kind of just sort of left on their own and they probably didn’t end up having children, so evolution rewarded those who developed the giving gene.
Arianna Huffington: Exactly. It’s makes complete evolutionary sense. Yet, some how in our culture it made giving like an after thought, like something we do at Thanksgiving or something we do over Christmas.

James Altucher: Now, so you had all of these – you started developing all of these different practices and what started happening? You started seeing the results in the Huffington Post. The Huffington Post was growing and growing. What made you decide at one point, “Okay, now’s the time to sell this and take it to the next step?”

Arianna Huffington: Again, it was being very clear about how fast the world of media was moving. I knew that if we were going to remember a leader – if we were going to remain a leader in the field we needed the resources to keep growing in multiple areas. We keep growing in terms of our technology and develop our mobile and video technologies, expand globally, as I mentioned, and also expand investigative coverage, expand coverage in these areas of how we can lead healthier, more sustainable lives. So in order to do all that we needed resources, so frankly, the greatest incentive for selling was not the fact that we got a lot of money, which was great, trust me, it was the fact that we got the resources to expand in all these areas. The fact that –

James Altucher: Do you feel media is changing a little bit with the rise of sites, like BuzzFeed, or Viral Nova, or Distractify? You know, these sites that kind of appear out of nowhere and scrape content from everywhere, just for the purposes of going viral as opposed to more journalistic purposes?

Arianna Huffington: I think we’re going to have a hybrid world more and more that incorporates a lot of different sites, that incorporates both, sites that are platforms that are inviting the participation of people, whether they’re writers or entrepreneurs or artists, and also I think more and more sites value more than ever the traditional functions of journalism, fact checking, accuracy, fairness, and in-depth reporting. So I think this is going to be a golden age of journalism, because it involves the participation and engagement of our readers.

James Altucher: It’s interesting, because I was talking with somebody from the Associated Press, which is definitely old-school, traditional media, and their basic approach now is they see what topics are trending on Twitter and that’s where they know where to send their reporters. Like, Twitter has become such a big part of not only media consumption, but media generation. I wonder how that affects what articles you cover or pursue at the Huffington Post.

Arianna Huffington: You know, we at the Huffington Post, from the beginning, from day one, have had certain editorial priorities, including the fate of the middle class,
the fate of the unemployed, who have Art Delaney, a reporter dedicated to covering this and putting flesh and blood on the data. We’ve been covering the world in Iraq and Afghanistan and the impact it’s had, the lives of returning Vets is, again, a topic we’ve been covering relentlessly and that won us our first Pulitzer. The failed war on drugs; so we have a lot of topics that are completely independent of what is trending, because they are topics that we believe in and that we believe we want to be putting the spotlight on. At the same time we believe, and that’s consistent with a message of right, that we have a responsibility to put the spotlight on what is working, not just what is dysfunctional and corrupt.

*James Altucher:* I think it’s, you know, it’s very important, because I think these are areas that are largely uncovered or under covered in traditional media, like nobody quite understands what’s happening to the middle class right now, but the reality is the middle class is systematically getting fired from the Fortune 500. I see this from various viewpoints, but essentially, the Fortune 500 is globalizing, is outsourcing, is using technology to replace workers, and that’s why these stress levels in this economic uncertainty is rising even as the economic data is also rising. So it’s creating this sort of bilateral economy where there’s very few clear winners. I think that’s why a book like yours is important, because people can’t look for the traditional metrics for success. They have to find different metrics that are internal to themselves.

*Arianna Huffington:* But I don’t think that that’s the only reason. I think that people who can be fully successful by the first two metrics of success realize that that’s not enough, that it’s like a two-legged stool. Sooner or later you fall off. So I think that’s the most important message, that the two metrics, wherever you are, whether you’re struggling to put food on the table or at the top of the career ladder are not a full life. They don’t give us the sense of purpose and meaning that we want in life, and the joy that we want in life.

*James Altucher:* That’s right, and there’s a lot of studies that show that, you know, incremental increases in income, for instance, don’t always have the same increase in happiness; that after a certain point increases in income don’t increase happiness at all in general.

So let’s say someone wants to follow the ideas you describe in your book. What are the initial steps they should take or you advise they take, given that you’re advising, you know, small steps at first and it’s hard to do everything at once?

*Arianna Huffington:* So at the end of each chapter there are three small steps. Let me just mention one from the end of each section. At the end of the Well Being section, for example, I recommend just five minutes of meditation, beginning with this quiet time, this connection with ourselves, and then...
allowing that to bring its own rewards that would lead us to want to spend more time with ourselves.

At the end of the Wisdom chapter one of my favorite steps is at the end of each day escort all of your devices outside the bedroom and never charge your smart phones by your bed, because you’re going to be tempted, if you wake up in the middle of the night, to go to your devices, to check your data, and then your sleep will not be as recharging.

At the end of the Wonder chapter –

James Altucher: People don’t realize actually the screen itself releases so much dopamine into the body that it actually prevents you from going back to sleep. Like the screen – for my own self I don’t use any – I don’t have any screen time at all after 6:00PM if I want to have a good night’s sleep, because that’s how detrimental any screen is towards your sleep.

Arianna Huffington: Exactly. And again, the science is incontrovertible here.

James Altucher: Yes. And you know, another one you have in the Wisdom chapter, which I think is incredibly important and I think a lot of people forget it in their day-to-day lives, is create a gratitude list. You know, list the things you’re grateful for. What I always tell people is try to make it different each day so that it’s almost like a gratitude muscle you have to exercise and it’s hard to find new things each day.

Arianna Huffington: Yes. I love that. Absolutely. It is a gratitude muscle. I’m going to quote you on that too.

James Altucher: Because like every day I could say, “Oh, I’m grateful for my two kids,” but that’s like the easy way out. Like it becomes harder. I have to sweat that gratitude muscle if I have to think of things other than my kids.

Arianna Huffington: Okay. I’m going to, on my gratitude list tonight, which I do every night, I’m going to say that doing this podcast with you goes on my gratitude list.

James Altucher: That’s excellent. I’ll do that as well.

Arianna Huffington: Because I really feel that we reinforce the message for each other when we are with kindred spirits, who approach the same things with your own individuality and your own language, and we learn from each other. That’s why I think this journey is going to be so exciting in the years ahead, because more and more people are going to be reinventing their lives. Again, small, baby steps; I want to stress that. No big, huge changes, because they’re often not lasting.
James Altucher: Right. Well, I was –


James Altucher: I always mention, you know, in the story of the Wizard of Oz, you know, Dorothy has no idea what’s going to be at the end of the yellow brick road, but she has to take that first step on the yellow brick road, and that’s how she begins her reinvention. But you’re like the master of reinvention. Like how many times in your life would you say you’ve completely reinvented your career?

Arianna Huffington: You know, it’s all happened in such an organic way that it’s hard to see it that way, because let’s start with my book. This is my 14th book, but my books have been so different, so every book took me in a completely different direction, you know, from biographies, to politics, to how to live our best lives. But Huffington Post was definitely an entirely new career, which I entered in my 50s. So that’s, I think that’s what is exciting, that there’s no limit to have a section of Huffington Post, Huff plus 50, that deals with life after 50, and that’s a great time to keep looking at all the things that we want to do differently in our lives.

James Altucher: Well, and this also seems related to your Wonder chapter where, you know, kind of always taking this child-like approach to the world, so you do feel that sense of wonder. But specifically, you have an exercise here: Forgive yourself for any judgments you are holding against yourself. I think that’s critically important as well. So many people spend so much time regretting things in the past that hurt them, but it’s almost like they’re hurting themselves twice, because then they have – they did the initial thing and that was the first arrow, but then they have the judgment against the initial thing and that’s the second arrow. The second arrow is what could kill you.

Arianna Huffington: Well, and that’s why one of the steps at the end of the Wonder chapter is forgive yourself at the end of the day for any judgments you are holding against yourself and then forgive your judgments of others. I say in the book if Nelson Mandela can do it, you can too. Then, you know, really look at our lives and the day ahead with newness and wonder.

James Altucher: Yes. I think that’s a good exercise and, again, it’s an excellent book. I try to practice the exercises in this book. I highly recommend people get it. It’s Thrive by Arianna Huffington. I’m so glad you could take the time to join us on my show.

Arianna Huffington: James, thank you so much. I look forward to staying in touch. Thank you.
James Altucher: Definitely. Thanks, Arianna.

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