

Podcast Title: *Today's Heartlift with Janell*

Episode Title: Let Your Heart Speak

In this episode of *Today's Heartlift with Janell*, host Janell Rardon is joined by Wisconsin-based graphic recorder, illustrator and educator Sherrill Knezel. As an educator, she has focused on visual literacy. She is the founder of [Meaningful Marks LLC](#), a graphic recording and illustration firm and the 2018/2019 Excellence in Visual Journalism Award winner for her work in the Milwaukee Independent. Together, Janelle and Sherrill unpack what it means to let your life speak and dive into Sherrill's new book [Heart Speak: A Visual Interpretation of Let Your Life Speak](#).

To begin, Sherrill tells the story of how she became introduced to [Let Your Life Speak](#) by Parker Palmer, the book which inspires Sherrill's own book. For her 50th birthday, Sherrill gifted herself to a retreat led by Parker Palmer and spent the weekend in conversation, listening to music and poetry and more. She sketch-noted her experiences at the retreat and proposed the idea to Parker to write a book together. During the pandemic, she had the idea to create illustrations which went along with the book she had adored for so long.

Sherrill defines a graphic recorder as the dedicated listener in the room who uses images and text to capture the essence of a conversation. She conducts her work anywhere where people are gathering for an important conversation. As her education background is in art instruction, Sherrill integrates her practice of graphic recording among the curriculum for her young students. Additionally, she conducts workshops with teachers and corporate spaces because the need to understand visual communication is universal.

Once Sherrill approached Parker with the idea of illustrating his book, he gave her full reign to do as she pleased because it was the only book of his that he owned outright. They had monthly meetings over Zoom to discuss where her sketches were at. Sherrill found that the same quotes continued to speak to her over and over. Then, Sherrill shares her perspective that making mistakes can often lead us to discovering something new and beautiful along our paths. This is a concept she stresses to her students in the art classroom. She explains that scientists are actually very similar in that both professions require bravery and the ability to take risks. When either makes a mistake, this is when the true magic happens. Reframing the way we think of mistakes helps to take away the shame and discover new possibilities.

Next, Sherrill reads a few passages from Parker's book and shares her thoughts to go along with them. The first page says, *"Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you."* In response, Sherrill writes, *"I have gotten myself into trouble trying*

*to be everything for everybody. I assigned self worth only when I was doing or helping or being what someone else told me I should be. When I listen quietly and allow for what wants to emerge, that is when I can gently hold life's hand..."* We are all taught to tell our lives what we plan to do with it, set goals and always be achieving. However, we are not taught to listen. We can uncover our life's truths by taking the time to truly listen to our bodies, desires and emotions.

In another passage, Parker writes *"The true self, when violated, will always resist us, sometimes at great cost. Holding our lives in check as we honor its truth."* To this, Sherrill writes *"I have learned that when I deny my true self, all sorts of interesting things happen. When I push on and do what I think others expect of me instead of listening to that quiet voice inside, I put my mind, body and soul at peril."* Readers are asked to think of a moment in which they have denied their own true self. She opens up about her own times neglecting herself and what came out of it. She learned the importance of self care and checking in with your body.

Next, Sherrill reveals a few of the many consequences of skimping on our inner work. We are often taught that it is bad to put ourselves and our needs before the needs of others. Parker writes *"One begins the slow walk back to health by choosing each day things that enliven one's selfhood and resisting things that do not."* This, Janell reveals, is a true "lean in" moment as we go into the new year. Listeners are encouraged to think of one small thing which enlivens them, and how they can resist things that don't. Janell requests that we have a further conversation about this very question on Instagram. For Sherrill, acknowledging that her tendency to physically take on other people's emotional energy is not serving her well is the first step. We all have to realize that we can't be the carrier of the emotional baggage of others. All we can do is listen and do our own work.

Before wrapping up, we visit one more passage. Parker writes *"Sometimes the 'shoulds' do not work because the life one is living runs crosswise to one's soul."* To this, Sherrill writes, *"I carried 'shoulds' for a long time and still catch myself picking up some that aren't mine to carry. I've learned to check in with my body and try on a new decision..."* Listeners are encouraged to think about what physical feeling you get when you listen to "shoulds" instead of your soul, and what is one step you can take to move less crosswise? Sometimes, Sherrill explains, saying "no" can actually be a gift for others. Making sure that your "yeses" align with your soul is crucial. In order to move less crosswise, we should pay attention to the things which bring us joy and continuously choose them.

In closing, Janell shares the follow up prompt from today's conversation with Sherrill: What is one thing that enlivens you and how can we release something that doesn't enliven us?

### Key Takeaways:

0:00 - Janell introduces today's guest, Sherrill Knezel.

3:08 - Sherrill's relationship with Parker Palmer's *Let Your Life Speak*.

8:08 - What exactly is a graphic recorder?

12:04 - How Sherrill's book came to be.

20:25 - Reframing how we think of mistakes.

23:41 - Reading a passage from the book on listening to our life's intentions with us.

25:46 - How can we listen to what our life's plan is?

29:43 - Reading a passage regarding our true self.

36:44 - Reading a passage unpacking the consequences of skimping on our inner work.

39:59 - Janell identifies a "lean in" moment.

45:37 - Being careful not to carry other people's emotional energy.

49:00 - How moving crosswise from the soul can be damaging.

54:08 - How can we move less crosswise?

58:21 - Where listeners can get in touch with Sherrill.

59:35 - Janell shares today's follow up prompt.

### Links:

Learn more about [Sherrill Knezel](#) and find *Heart Speaks* [here](#).

Learn more about [Janell Rardon](#) and join the [Stronger Every Day](#) online community.

Learn more about the podcast: [Today's Heartlift with Janell](#)

### Tags:

Mindfulness, creativity, visual literacy, visual arts, images, courage, parker palmer, inspiration, drawing, graphic recorder, listening, diversity, inclusion, students, understanding, art education, illustration, author, mistakes, emotional intelligence, true self, trauma, true self, inner work, empath