

EPISODE 189

***LW:** “What the comfort zone is really good at doing is distorting the risk factors, distorting what you may potentially lose, distorting how embarrassing it may be to have a podcast, and all the reasons why it's not going to work, right? It magnifies the risks. That's what the comfort zone does. The comfort zone is that place that you're in without having put any sort of investment in this thing that you're ultimately feeling called to do. Once you start to put some investment into it, once you get the microphone, once you record a few episodes, once you invest in a designer to help you with cover for your podcast, once you publish the first six or so podcast episodes, the risks that you saw in your comfort zone before you did any of that are going to be significantly diminished compared to how you're viewing them from the comfort zone with no investment.”*

[INTRODUCTION]

Hey friend, welcome back to The Light Watkins Show. I'm Light Watkins and I have conversations with ordinary folks just like you and me who've taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified as their mission in life. And in doing so, they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who've either heard about their story or who witnessed them in action or people who've directly benefited from their work.

And the goal is to expose you to as many people as possible who found their path and to humanize them by telling their story. Hopefully you give yourself permission to move further in the direction of whatever feels like your path and purpose. Because what you'll see is that anyone who's done that has had to overcome many of the same obstacles that you may be dealing with right now.

And today I have a solo episode for you. So it's just going to be you and me and I'm celebrating a milestone today. I've published close to 200 episodes. It's actually 199 episodes, but let's just round it up to 200 episodes. And the theme of today's solo episode is the 10 things that I have learned from publishing my first couple of hundred episodes.

And during this solo episode, I'm going to talk about How I got the ball rolling with this podcast back in 2020, four years ago, and why these first 200 episodes have gone by seems like just super fast.

I'm going to talk about my view on my favorite episodes versus which episodes end up getting the most traction and why I think that's the case. I'll talk about why the process of booking my podcast guests is a lot like dating and how the key to growing your show is counterintuitive to what you may want to do when bringing guests on week after week.

I also go into why I rebranded the podcast a couple of years into the show and what I learned from that process and why you should do the same under certain conditions. I break down the blueprint to living your purpose and how you might become a guest on a podcast like mine if you can get through this one point that everybody who lives their purpose ends up. If you can successfully navigate this one point that everybody who ends up living their purpose ends up navigates. I unpack which podcast episodes have become the most popular and why I think that's the case. And I talk about which equipment is essential for getting your podcast off the ground. If you are thinking about starting a podcast. And spoiler alert, it's not as much equipment as you may think.

And finally, I talk about how having a podcast can help you understand and shape your perspective and how that's really hard to do properly without some way of going public with your perspective.

For this episode, I have three audiences in mind. There are those of you who are just fans of the show and you want to have a peek behind the curtain to understand the ins and outs of having a podcast. And then there are those of you who may be thinking of starting a podcast and you're not quite sure how to do that or what are the best practices. And finally, I'm speaking to anyone out there who has a podcast that doesn't seem to be growing and you're on the verge of quitting and you're not very consistent. And you just need some inspiration to keep going. So if you're in one of those buckets, then you're going to get a lot from this episode.

And then there's a fourth mini bucket that I also touch on, and that is if you think you'd be a good guest on someone's podcast and you're thinking of hiring a PR company to pitch you to various podcasts. I've got some valuable information on that process and why you may not want to go with the PR agency. Or if you do how you want to instruct them to pitch you so that your pitch stands out from the crowd because I receive many, many pitches from PR agencies.

So there's a lot in there. And we're just going to get right into it. Let's dive into this solo episode about the 10 things that I have learned in my first 200 podcast episodes.

[00:05:22] And we are back with another solo episode. I believe this is solo episode number 13 and overall, this is my 199th podcast episode since I started this podcast. The first episode launched March 2nd, 2020. I published an interview that I did with Leon Logothetis, who was the kindness guy who circumnavigated the globe in a vintage yellow motorcycle and did a whole Netflix series called The Kindness Diaries. And he's a friend from LA. And so that was the first interview I published literally four years ago this month. And so here we are at episode 199 and we'll just call it 200, 200 episodes just to keep it really simple.

[00:06:18] But I want to use this solo episode to reflect back on these last four years and to talk about some of the things that I've learned, and some of the insights that I've had over these four years in case any of you are in the podcast game or thinking about going into the podcast game or just curious about how podcasts work. I want to just share some of the behind the scenes learnings and the mechanics of producing a podcast as someone who doesn't have a big team, and hopefully inspire you to keep going or to start or to support your other friends who have podcasts and just to become more familiar with what it means to be a podcaster.

[00:07:13] I'm definitely not in the same category as a Tim Ferriss or Mark Manson or Lewis Howes or somebody who's got a massive podcast with millions and millions of downloads. I know a lot of those people and I know people, I have friends who have podcasts that generate seven figures and six figure incomes every year and that's pretty much all they do is work on their podcast. And if you go to their social media, you'll just see clip after clip of people that they've interviewed on their podcast, and they're basically all in on their podcast. I'm not one of those people.

[00:07:53] Do I aspire to become one of those types of podcasters? Perhaps. One day. But I have a lot of other things that I enjoy doing as well. And so for me, podcasting is a significant part of my spectrum of offerings, but it's definitely not the main thing. And so therefore I haven't invested that level of resources towards making the podcast my full time job. So that's the perspective through which I'm going to be speaking about podcasting is not as someone who's like at the top of the mountain, but someone who has a healthy amount of followers and supporters and, you know, I get the occasional big name guest. And I'm a weekly show as opposed to being, you know, a show that has two or three episodes per week, which all those bigger podcasts usually do. And I'm not a one man show, but I definitely have a very small team that helps me with my podcast. And so I'll reveal all of the inner workings of the podcast with you in this episode and just, yeah, talk about some of the learnings that I have had over these last four years since launching the podcast back in March of 2020.

[00:09:21] So I recorded my very first episode in November of 2019. I've talked about this before, but just so that you don't have to go back and research, I recorded my first episode with Emma Maynew, who I think was my second published episode once I started. And I just happened to be in London and she invited me on to her podcast, which was called Surviving Sundays. And it was her very first episode and she and I were friends from London. And after I went on her podcast, I was like, hey, you want to come on my podcast? She said, sure. So because she was a friend of mine, she didn't ask me a whole lot of questions because I didn't have any good answers. I didn't even have a podcast. I was just recording at the time and I didn't have a podcast hosting platform. I didn't have a name. I didn't have really anything, except my iPhone. And so I had an iPhone and I had a tripod. I put the iPhone on a tripod. I had just gotten these lav mics that I purchased online on Amazon and gave her a lav mic and I had a lav mic and then we set that up and there was a transmitter coming from the iPhone. So all the video and audio was being recorded all on one track in the iPhone. And we sat down and just had a conversation. And I was just asking her questions about her journey. I really hadn't done a whole lot of research on her journey. So I was learning as I went and I figured I would edit out the stuff that I didn't want to use later on. I didn't know how it was going to do

that, but that's what I decided for myself. And that became the interview that essentially helped me get traction on this idea of having a podcast.

[00:11:03] Because the next week I happened to be in New York city and because I had done that one interview, I reached out to another friend of mine who I knew had an interesting story of finding her birth mother and then starting a nonprofit to help foster children. So I reached out to her and I said, hey, I've got this podcast. I've already done one episode. I would love for you to come on and record an episode with me. She agreed, went to her apartment. We both got mic'd up. I didn't have my mic plugged in all the way. So I made a mistake. I didn't double check that. And so the final episode the audio was off because again, it's just one track so we couldn't use it.

[00:11:48] But because she was a friend of mine, I was able to reach out to her and tell her what had happened and she agreed to be interviewed again which we arranged for another week or two later.

[00:12:00] And so this went on, I was, I was occasionally interviewing people; people who were mostly friends of mine, people who I had a connection with or a relationship with. I didn't know when I was going to launch this thing. As you know, in, in 2020, the, pandemic started. So it wasn't really until the pandemic started that I decided to use some of my downtime to really hone in on this podcast. And that's when I came up with the title, which the original title for the podcast was At The End of The Tunnel where I was making a pun on my name, Light, at the end of the tunnel. But interestingly enough, a lot of people thought it was a podcast about death. But it was really a podcast about people who had found their purpose. And so I, I stuck with that name and I came up with a design. I hired a designer to help me with some ideas for what the cover design would look like for the podcast and finally settled on one.

[00:13:04] And then the podcast eventually launched with the episode with Leon Logothetis, followed by my episode with Emma, followed by a few other episodes that I had recorded previously. And we were off to the races. Over those next four years, I recorded episodes with mostly people who had started movements which is kind of what I wanted my offering to be in the podcast world. I did not want to interview people who had just made a lot of money or who were materially successful for whatever reason, or recognized just as celebrities. I wanted people who were making an impact in the social good of people's lives and and or people who were reallocating their resources or their connections to helping people improve their lives in some way.

[00:13:59] I was inspired initially by Guy Raz's, How I Built This podcast, which I was part of. Addicted to listening to on a weekly basis where he would talk to entrepreneurs, founders and people who had started big brands that we now that have become household names and go back to the earliest days and talk about how they got some traction in whatever the brand was and unpacking that process.

[00:14:32] And the themes that emerged were very similar in everybody's story where they had an idea and they everyone told them it wouldn't work and maybe they even doubted it themselves a bit, but they tried it anyway. They put themselves out there in some interesting way, and then lo and behold it caught traction. And then they started to make mistakes that potentially caused them to lose everything, but then they kept at it. And then something, they discovered some other new aspect of it that they never would have discovered had they not started. And then that caused it to have hockey stick growth. And then it became the brand that we know and love today. So I wanted to take that same format to my podcast and talk about purpose. And I wanted to reverse engineer it back to childhood to see if there were connections between what people were excited about as children, what toys or activities they played with or did the most as children versus or compared to what they're doing now as adults in their life. And so I would start with that question almost in every conversation, especially in those first few years, what was your favorite toy or activity as a child, hoping that it would somehow tie back to what they're doing now. Sometimes it was an obvious connection. A lot of times it wasn't so obvious. But more often than not, there was definitely some sort of connection that you could make. But I would wait until the end of the interview before tying it all together just in case something else was discovered during the interview.

[00:16:14] And my personal style, kind of like again, taking a page from Guy Raz's book is to do very deep research on everybody's story and to take a more linear approach to telling that story, as opposed to jumping around from life moment to life moment, which a lot of podcast interviewees are kind of used to doing, because very few podcast hosts will go from, you know, childhood up until whatever's going on right now. Usually people get right to the thing that they're most famous for and ask a few questions about that. And I wanted to really focus more on the in between moments and the internal motivations for why they did the thing that they are now famous for.

[00:17:02] So for instance, if someone is famous for starting a, well, just, let's take this one example. Let's say you have a Marianne Williamson who ran for president, right? And she's known as a spiritual self help author. And that's kind of her claim to fame. But then she decides I want to run for president. So what a lot of podcasts hosts will do is they'll ask her about her platform. What is she going to bring unique to the presidential race and, you know, these kinds of questions. Whereas I want it to really focus in on her inner motivations for deciding to run for president. What fears does she have to overcome? What sort of mental health obstacles was she facing during that time? And granted, somebody running for president is not really going to want to get into all of that, and she kind of didn't want to get into all of that with me. So we had to edit around all of that, but that's the approach that I wanted to take in general. And so when you have these sort of bigger, more high profile guests, a lot of times they won't be willing to play along as much, especially if, you know, there's a lot that they can lose if things get misinterpreted by people who didn't hear the whole conversation and the clip gets taken out of context.

[00:18:30] If it's a less well known guest, then usually those are the guests that you can go really deep into it and for that reason you end up having more powerful episodes I find. So that

was the format that I started off with and and that became my sort of unique offering to the podcast world.

[00:18:50] So when I'm researching a guest, when I'm reading their books, when I'm looking at their body of work, that's primarily what I was looking for. I wasn't really looking for the seven ways of, you know, improving this part of your life or the five tricks to, to doing X, Y, and Z. I'm looking more for their personal stories, the in between moments that they've perhaps mentioned in previous episodes or on other interviews, and that's what I'm taking notes about so that I can ask further questions about those moments.

[00:19:33] So I want to just go over some of the learnings that I have had over these years, and I've kind of broken them down into 10 different learnings or 10 different insights. So we can go over those, and I think once we get through all of them, we will have covered pretty much everything that I've learned from interviewing those almost 200 guests over these last four years. But one of the things that struck me today, as I look back over these last four years, it's just how fast the whole process goes because I'm doing a weekly show. And again, this is not my full time job although I devote many hours every week to the podcast, but it goes by very fast. I think this is one of the reasons why a lot of people don't stick with it once they start a podcast, because it's because they don't realize how much volume there is on a weekly basis.

[00:20:34] You ideally want to stay ahead of the podcast that you're publishing that week. You want to stay about, I don't know, four or five episodes ahead if you can. Just to give you a little bit more leeway to be more selective in the people that you are interviewing for your show, because if it gets down to you only have one episode in the can, and you don't have any other episodes after that one episode, and then you publish that one episode, then you have to find someone to come onto your podcast, and that's where you start getting into, you know, just letting people on that you wouldn't normally have on your show or people whose stories or whose backgrounds don't exactly match the theme of your show. And you know, you're wanting to curate the right guests for the audience that you are creating so you're telling your audience what the theme is ideally in the intro or on the podcast web page, you're saying this is a podcast about X, Y, and Z, or from, in my case, this is a podcast about purpose. For that reason, the people that I'm bringing on are people whose stories or whose platforms have been used to help inspire people in some way or help to improve the social good.

[00:22:00] if I have somebody on there who's very well known, but they haven't really used their platform in any way to help other people, then that person is not going to match the criteria that I have for my show. It doesn't mean that they wouldn't be good for someone else's show. It's just that they're not great for my show.

[00:22:20] For instance, if I have somebody who reaches out to me and says, hey, I would love to come on to your podcast, and I get requests all the time from publicists pitching people to come on to your show. And they go down the list of, you know, what that person wants to talk about or can talk about, that's what I'm looking for when I'm reading that list. And it's very rare for me to find someone who is pitching themselves, who matches that criteria.

[00:22:51] And in a lot of ways this is because, you know, the PR companies that get hired by these guests to pitch them on various podcasts they're sending out essentially form emails to different podcasts. And I guess they're doing this so that they can just increase the volume of the number of podcasts that they reach out to. But it's been really telling for me as someone who's used a public relations person before, of just how ineffective it can be to have someone else reaching out on your behalf who's not really taking the time and the effort and the intention to speak to that particular podcast host, and to customize the letter to what that particular podcast host is known for. And I think if people did that, they would get a much higher response for that guest. And all you would have to do is say, okay, what are the three things that this podcast is about? And then what are the three things that my guest can match with this podcast? Otherwise if you're not doing that, then people just ignore it because you don't realize how many of these PR letters, podcast hosts receive. I probably get, I don't know, and again, I'm not a huge podcast. I have friends who have massive podcasts and they get dozens of books a week. They get tons and tons of these PR letters, and I'm not even at that level, and I still get probably a couple of day people pitching various guests. I would say that if I got 12 in a week, 11 and a half of them are not a good fit for my podcast. And these are people who are paying their PR person, you know, probably \$5,000, \$6,000 a month. And probably the intern or somebody is being tasked with sending out these pitches to various podcast hosts.

[00:24:53] And yes, they're probably able to send them out to more podcast hosts, but I think that if they were to customize them a little bit more, they would get a higher conversion rate from, more hosts than they would from just sending out the same pitch to, you know, however many, a thousand hosts and these hosts are just ignoring them basically.

[00:25:14] So I would say if you are trying to be on someone's podcast and you have a PR person or you're thinking about getting a PR person, just make sure that they are going to customize your pitch to whatever podcast they're going to send it out to. Otherwise you're basically wasting your money because most of these podcasts hosts are not looking at these pitches.

[00:25:35] And in fact, if you have an assistant or somebody, you can send out your own pitch on your own behalf that is customized to whatever that podcast is known for. And you probably will have better success doing that than you would paying somebody 6, 000 a month to send out this form letter to a bunch of hosts. But anyway, it goes fast and you're always kind of on the hunt for success. guests, good guests that fit the theme of your podcast.

[00:26:11] And that takes me to the second point, which is booking podcast guests is a lot like dating. It's a lot like dating. What do I mean by that? Well, when you're dating, typically you want to date someone who you perceive to be either at your level or a little bit above your level or a lot above your level. Right? And so when it comes to a podcast guest, ideally you want someone on there who's going to either be at the same level of all the other podcast guests that you've had on or to be above that level, meaning they've got a bigger audience, they've got a bigger platform, they got more people, more eyeballs looking at their stuff. And so when they come on to your show, it will give your show a lot more, eyeballs, or maybe even a lot more validity because you had that person on your podcast. And you see this too, going back

to the previous point, when people are pitching guests, the best pitches or the most effective pitches are people who say, this person has already been on, you know, Lewis houses podcast and so and so's podcast and Tim Ferriss' podcast, and Rich Rolls podcast, you know, like, okay, well, they've already been on all these major podcasts. I want to be a major podcast. Let me take a closer look at what they're talking about. And the other cool thing is that when they're on those other podcasts, you can go back and you can look at their podcasts and you can see the kind of stories they tell. You can see how they come off cross on podcasts and that would be an easier, yes, that's an easier yes.

[00:27:54] The other thing that makes booking a podcast guests like dating is you have to match their schedule? So just because you want someone in your podcast, and just because they agree to come on your podcast, it doesn't mean that you're going to find a time that fits for both of you, the bigger, the guests, usually the busier the schedule. And so you may not be able to talk to them for a month or a month and a half or whatever. Again, if you're not at least four or five episodes ahead in your publishing schedule, you need someone to come onto the podcast next week or in two weeks, you're not going to get a lot of big guests like that because you don't have the timeline that will accommodate those bigger guests and their schedules. So it's not to say you're going to turn down the big guest but if you have a, several of those conversations going on at all times, then, you know, some of them will land soon. Some of them will not be scheduled for later, but you'll always have a nice inflow of those conversations.

[00:28:57] Now, what you bring to the table when you have a big guest with a bigger platform on than your podcast is you bring a conversation and hopefully a clippable moments that guest can use to share on their platform which comes back to the quality of your production, the quality of the video that you're capturing.

[00:29:22] And video is really important these days when people are considering coming onto someone's podcast, I've heard guests say that they only go on podcasts with video because everybody wants to have something to post afterward that looks good, that has B roll in it. That's got some nice music in it. That's quick. That's a hot take. And so if you can interview someone in a way that, that produces all of these assets for people, then you'll be a, those will become advertisements for other guests to come onto your podcast and be, you'll be able to provide more value to those bigger guests in order to get more bigger guests.

[00:30:08] And once you have, you know, Once you have four or five big name guests, then you can be the person reaching out to another guest and saying, Hey, I've got this podcast. You know, Marianne Williamson has been on the podcast already. Author Steven Pressfield has been on the podcast. I've had, you know, these other three or four big names on my podcast. And again, that gets their attention because if they're following those people's work and, or they admire those people because they're in the same field, then that makes it an easier, yes, for them. So it's a game and you're always punching above your weight and you're hoping for the best. You're not necessarily taking no for an answer because you will get a lot of no's, but it just means not right now, because if you do get some bigger guests on later, you can always go back and say, hey, I've got such and such on. And I think you'd be a great addition to the

platform and you'd never know. You may be able to convert not now and to a yes at some point later based on however many people you've had on your show. So don't get discouraged if you're trying to get big guests and everyone's turning you down, just keep delivering the highest quality product that you can with the guests that you are having on to the show. And eventually you'll get enough traction and one of those episodes is going to really resonate, and you never know who's going to see it. You never know who's going to see it. Okay.

[00:31:41] Which brings me to point three, which is the episodes that I think are going to resonate are not often the ones that end up resonating. So I've had some, again, some fairly big name guests on the podcast. A lot of times the big name guests, those episodes don't really go viral in the way that I anticipate them going viral. But the ones who people haven't really heard of before those guests, those are the ones that can be a lot more impactful and just, they can lead to deeper conversations. Again, because people who haven't built massive platforms and who haven't gone on a lot of podcasts, they're not as scripted as a lot of the bigger guests are. And you'll see this when you go to a bigger guest and you look at several of their interviews, you'll hear the exact same stories told in the exact same way and little details that seem like they're just thinking of them in the moment, these are details that they've told over and over, and it's not often that you get something new and unique from bigger guests and podcasts unless you as the interviewer are expert enough to get them off of their normal script and to become more spontaneous in the way that they are telling the stories. And that's something that I strive to do because I, again, I listened to a lot of their other interviews and a lot of times if I hear a story that they've said over and over, I'll ask the question by letting them know about that story, and then I'll ask a follow up question about some other in-between moments related to the story.

[00:33:21] I'll say like, I know that you love to go to this one diner every day for breakfast and you love to order this one dish. When did you start doing that? Like, why did you choose that diner as opposed to any other diner? What was the moment that made you realize that this is something I want to keep repeating over and over, right? I'm just making this up but... So I've already. Admit it that I know the story so they don't have to really tell me that story about the dish and dah, dah, dah, dah. I want to hear the backstory to that story and that gets them out of the script and then they start to go that's a really good question. No one's ever asked me that before. And I hear that all the time on my podcast. No one's ever asked me that before, but that's what leads to new information and new stories and more vulnerable moments that can cause that particular episode to resonate in a way that you may not be anticipating.

[00:34:22] And I've also had episodes, if I'm being completely honest, where I got off of the call with the guest and I didn't think it was a great interview because it didn't go off script like I wanted it to, or it didn't meet some other objective that I had. And then I'll like, hold on to it for a while just kind of thinking I don't know if I even want to put this episode out there and I ended up putting it out there. It ended up being a very popular episode that's happened to me, like a handful of times over these last four years. Enough times that I no longer, I just trust the process now, you know, it's someone that I felt called to interview and we interviewed and maybe it wasn't my favorite interview personally, but you know, I felt like that person really showed up and told their story in a way that was authentic. I'll put it out there and just see what

people have to say about it. And the only way really to know how people are responding to it is through social media. When I posted on social media, if people leave reviews about it, some people will leave specific reviews about a certain episode. And uh, if the number of ratings goes up in that particular episode. So when you hear people like me saying, leave a rating, leave a review and That's one way of telling me which types of podcasts that you, you like and which ones, you know, you want me to do more podcasts about.

[00:35:53] And then another question that people have related to this is, do I have a favorite episode? A lot of people will ask me, what's your favorite episode, Light? Here's the thing I don't really have a favorite episode. I've had some wonderful episodes. There've been a lot of wonderful moments from several episodes, but looking back, there's not really a favorite episode. If anything, I kind of see it all as a, just a body of work, you know, like this ongoing conversation that I'm having with multiple people about purpose. And for me, I get to learn more and more about this idea of following your purpose.

[00:36:35] And what I've come to realize is my next point, which is there is a blueprint to living your purpose that I've seen play out over and over and episode to episode. And it usually starts with the guest has this conventional life or they have a conventional way of thinking about life, and then something happens that causes him to question the conventional life or the conventional way of thinking. And they start wondering, well, this is interesting. Is someone going to do something about it? Is someone else going to step up? Is someone else going to help? And usually you realize that no one else cares as much as you care about this one thing, and that no one is coming to save the day. And so you give yourself permission to do something, take a step in the direction of helping someone else, even if it's helping someone through helping yourself, and you become this sort of one person show in offering a solution. And then as you continue doing that with consistency, you start to become more and more enthusiastic about it, and you may even become obsessed with it. And that's when other people start to notice, and then they start volunteering to help you. And that's how a movement is born. And I guarantee you, if you go back and you listen to the overwhelming majority of my podcast episodes, you will see, that formula play out again and again and again.

[00:38:17] And it's been very revealing to me personally as a student of purpose. And I talk a lot about purpose and write a lot about purpose just seeing it in real world scenarios over and over that anyone at any time has the capacity to step into their purpose provided that they're following that roadmap of, and life has a way of showing you things that don't have a lot of solutions so that you can step up and do something about it. But I think a lot of times we hold ourselves back because no one else cares as much as we care. And we're such tribal creatures that we'll kind of talk ourselves out of taking those next steps because we don't have anyone willing to go the distance with us. And that's really what makes the big difference at that junction point, the people who end up on my podcast are the ones that are willing to go by themselves. They're willing to take the leap of faith. They're willing to challenge convention. They're willing to offer a solution to a massive problem, even though they're just one person. And even though they can only help you know, a handful of people initially, at least, and that's what ends up drawing the enthusiasm of others so that they start to build the movement organically.

[00:39:35] And the other thing is, as I was learning that, what that roadmap looked like, that's, that was one of the reasons why I wanted to stick to the same format. In my show, starting with that question, what was your favorite toy or activity as a child? Asking questions like how did you see success as a young person or what sort of ideologies or philosophies did you learn from your caregivers when you were growing up? What did you see yourself becoming early? In your life, you know, these kinds of questions were, are all setups for that pivot that I know is coming later on in the story. So at the end of the interview, when I asked them, you know, how do you define success nowadays, just to see the juxtaposition between how they used to define success and how they define success now, it's always interesting for me. And I'm assuming if it's interesting for me, it's got to be interesting for the listener as well, so I keep that same format.

[00:40:36] This is something that I actually learned in yoga class as a yoga teacher back in the early 2000s. I used to go to teach classes and every class I would teach it a little differently because I would get bored with doing the same poses, the same style, playing the same music and what I found was it was very difficult to grow a yoga class if you keep switching it up over and over because people didn't know what to expect. And so one day I decided very intentionally, okay, I'm just going to teach the exact same class over and over. And I'm going to play mostly the same music and I'm going to have all of the same beats and I'm just going to see what happens. It's just going to be a big experiment. And that's the moment where my yoga classes started to really explode and grow, is because I realized that people like knowing what they're going to get. They like anticipating the next thing that they know is going to be coming. And if you can deliver that experience for them, they'll keep coming back over and over. And this was a huge revelation for me as someone who is creating something because I never anticipated. I thought, you know, yoga, of course, yoga is all about, you know, being connected to your spirit and being willing to change and adapt. But no, people are people. We're all living hectic lives, and so we like a bit of predictability in our lives to become a safe space from all of the unpredictable, hectic stuff that we're all having to deal with.

[00:42:24] And that's what my yoga classes became. And that's what these podcast interviews can be for people. Pretty much know what you're going to get when you come to these episodes. And it's not going to be the same thing you get from the other podcasts where, you know, they have their own format, whatever their own format is. Maybe it's biohacking life. Maybe it's about morning routines or whatever. This podcast is about the backstory of finding your purpose, starting in childhood, moving up, talking about success talking about those in between moments, talking about mental health. And other inspirations and motivations for taking leaps of faith, that's what you're going to get from this podcast.

[00:43:04] So for those of you who are thinking of starting your podcast, or if you're doing the podcast equivalent of what I was doing as an early yoga teacher, where you're all over the place, lock in on a format, lock in on a format that you like, because if you don't like it, then the guest is not going to be into it, and the audience is probably not going to be into it. But if it's a format that you like, and you're naturally curious about lock in on that and you will find that your podcast numbers will start to grow organically just from that one change. And then the other thing is you can't be afraid to pivot yourself. I had a rebrand, I think it was like two and a

half years into the podcast where I changed it from at the end of the tunnel to The Light Watkins Show. And the reason I did that was because I want it to alter the format a little bit. I still want it to talk about purpose, but the way it was originally set up, I could really only have one guest on one time because once you told their life story one time, it didn't make sense to bring them on again and tell it again. And so once I told their story and they came back on and they had something else that they were excited about or the next iteration of their story, I wanted to talk about that. So I decided that in order to create a safe space for that, I was going to change the name away from At The End of The Tunnel, where we may not be going into their dark tunnel moment in those subsequent episodes and change it to The Light Watkins Show, which would just make it a little bit more of a general type of expectation when it comes to the guests that I bring on or bring back onto the show and the topics that I talk about.

[00:44:55] So if you noticed, once I changed the name, I got a little bit looser with the format. So it wasn't as strictly about, you know, what'd you do as a child and what was your idea of success? And I kind of opened it up a little bit more. And it was still being, the interview was still happening with the same intent of helping the audience figure out a way that they could take more leaps of faith and follow their heart and trust in their inner guidance. But it wasn't, I wasn't sticking to this rigid format that I was sticking to in the very, in the early days of starting the podcast. And at this point, again, I'd had an audience built up. I had people who were very used to that format, but also who trusted me a lot more because they had heard interview at the interview. And I also wanted to start doing more solo interviews as well, which may be talking about how to start a podcast or maybe talking about how I gave up alcohol or, you know, something that was really unrelated to living a life of purpose necessarily, but at least not directly. So that was something that I think needed to happen to give me as the host permission to bring certain people on and to talk about certain subjects. I'm still happy that I started with At The End of The Tunnel and then I transitioned to The Light Watkins Show. I'm happy I didn't start with The Light Watkins Show. I think the more restrictive your format is in the early days, the better, I think it makes you a better host because you have to operate within those confines. So then once you start to open it up a little bit more later, you're already used to operating in those confines. So you kind of know where the conversation can go instead of just, again, guessing, is this the right direction? Is that the right direction? Is this what I want to do? Is that what I want to do?

[00:46:52] I also learned that people really enjoy hearing from me more than I anticipated. So doing these solo episodes, which I have to admit they're not the most comfortable to record because it's just me staring into a camera, the camera on my laptop and talking. They are not scripted. I do have some bullet points and stuff, but I'm not speaking word for word. Something that I've already written out. It's just me talking and it's and a lot of times I don't really know where it's going, meaning I don't know what I'm going to say. So I typically just tell the truth about whatever the experience was, and maybe sometimes I give enough context. Sometimes I don't give enough context, but for whatever reason people love it. I look at the numbers and I see that those episodes get way more listens, way more downloads, way more shares than the regular conversations, and this was interesting to me because again, I am a fan of listening to other people's stories. But I also now have to acknowledge that a lot of people enjoy hearing my story and my perspective on other people's story. So something that's evolved over those years, over those 200 episodes is I have started offering more of my own

opinions and commentary to my guests whenever they say something whereas before I would just let them talk because I personally didn't like. But I do think that there is a time and place for a little bit of that, and I wanted to offer some of that to the audience in my episodes in my interviews with guests, which again are very easy for me to do because I have a whole bunch of notes. I'm super interested in their story. I love unpacking it. When you're doing these solo episodes and it's just you, it's a little bit more intimidating, I should say. And it still is, honestly, even, having done solo episodes like dozens of times, it's still intimidating. But it is what it is. It's a part of it. And I think that just because seeing how people are resonating with the solos, I still want to offer more and more of that to the audience and apparently there's something that's being communicated that is a value for people. So I'm going to keep giving the people what they want and just trying to have fun with it.

[00:49:23] The other thing is, I think when we think about doing a podcast, you may imagine having a studio or having some big fancy microphone or, you know, whatever else you think you may need to do a podcast. And for the first three years of doing my podcast until relatively recently, I was doing my podcast exclusively from an iPad and from a microphone, and that's all I had. Because remember, I've been nomadic since 2018 I've been living from a backpack, and I'm not talking about one of those big, I'm going to Europe for the summer hiking backpacks. I'm talking about a day pack that your kid would take to school. Something around that size. So I had everything that I was using in life in that backpack. And my podcast equipment was just my iPad and my microphone. And that's how I did the first probably 150 episodes from that iPad. And that it came with some major limitations when it came to quality of video, sometimes quality of sound. But I just kept plugging away and eventually got to a point where I just decided I wanted to have a better quality of video. And so I upgraded from the iPad to a laptop. I didn't have a laptop since 2018 and I just got a laptop about a year ago, maybe even less than a year ago while I was living here in Mexico. And when you have a laptop and you're doing a podcast and you can use a host of platforms that have higher quality video, and you can also get higher quality audio from the laptop, things that you aren't able to necessarily get from the iPad yet. Maybe that'll change soon, but I have lots of experience doing it from the iPad. And like I said, my very first episode was shot on my iPhone and it was probably like an iPhone, I don't know, 10 or something like that. But all that to say where there's a will, there's a way. If you fancy doing a podcast, don't think that you have to have all this expensive equipment to get started, just start with whatever you have. You definitely want to have good audio quality, so you just need a regular mic. My mic is probably, I don't know \$100 mic. It's the one that Tim Ferriss uses. I don't know the name of it, but Tim Ferriss wrote a whole blog post about what you need to start a podcast. And I just got the exact mic that he has. And, so I would just say, get a good mic. You can probably do it from a phone if that's all you have, but where it's going to come into quality is in your research and types of questions you ask and the quality of your attention while you're having conversations and or if it's a solo episode, just kind of preparing your episodes so that you're giving the most value as possible, and that may require you to sit down and really think about what you want to say and what your bullet points are and whatever else you can provide the audience. To give value.

[00:52:41] For instance, I interviewed a guy named Cole Kushna who created this podcast called Dissect, which was one of my favorite podcasts. It's long form musical analysis. He'll take an album like Kanye West's My Beautiful, Dark, Twisted Fantasy and or Kendrick Lamar's

To Pimp A Butterfly and he'll break it down song by song talking about how each song is composed and what samples they used and what was going on in culture at the time that song was created, who was the producer and who contributed, what, and this is really fascinating if you're into musical analysis.

[00:53:19] So he wrote those episodes out. And produce them in his garage over the weekends. And that's how he started while he was working at a coffee shop during the day. And while he was a new father, you know, taking care of his little baby at night. And he did, I think, two seasons of that, he did the Kendrick season, first 13 episodes, up To Pimp A Butterfly, then he did the Kanye episode second. He didn't like call up Kendrick Lamar's camp or Kanye's camp and say, hey, you know, do you guys mind if I do this or that about your episodes? I really loved it. He just decided, Hey, look, this is what I'm passionate about. So I'm going to do this. And whoever wants to listen to it can, if I'm passionate about it, maybe somebody else out there is passionate about it as well. And he does this and it goes viral. His podcast Dissect just blows up. And eventually, after a second, after his second season, he's still in his closet. He's still in his garage. He's still working. He's now working on the next season with Frankie Ocean and one of his albums. He gets a call from Spotify who says, Hey, we heard what you're doing. And we want to give you an exclusive podcast agreement, a contract to produce on Spotify and we'll pay you. That was the moment where he got to quit his job at the coffee shop and become a full time podcaster because he did something that he was passionate about in his off hours when he didn't have any prospect of anyone wanting to pay him anything to work on this podcast, but he just took what he had and he did the most with what he had and granted, he had gone to music school and stuff so he was very well versed in audio engineering and things like that and music composition. But maybe you have your version of that. It doesn't necessarily have to be about music. It could be about whatever you're passionate about. And whatever you're uniquely qualified to talk about and to having a perspective that's unique to you. And maybe you think it's weird or you think people wouldn't be interested in hearing about this, but I would argue that if you're interested in it, then there's going to be other people out there who are interested in it. And that brings me to my last point, the 10th point, which is having a podcast helps you shape your perspective.

[00:55:38] You can have a perspective. You probably do have many perspectives and it's pretty easy to have a perspective. If. You never get questioned about it or you never have to defend your perspective. But what having a podcast does is it forces you to think about your perspective in a way that honors other people's perspectives that may be different from yours.

[00:56:03] So I'll say that again, having a podcast forces you to think about your perspective in a way that honors other people's perspectives. other people's perspectives that may be different from yours. You don't, you won't do that. Just naturally, unless it's public, unless you go public with your perspective.

[00:56:22] Cole Kushna who did Dissect, he's putting out all kinds of interesting thoughts and opinions around why Kanye did this or why Kendrick did that, or, you know, what sample this thing was from. So he had to be fairly accurate. in his perspective or in the reason behind his perspective as he went public with that if he didn't want to get a lot of backlash from other

people because he didn't do his homework, he didn't do his research. So that's a way of honoring other perspectives that are out there. When it comes to you putting your perspective out there. And again, it sounds like a lot of work if you've never done it before, but actually it helps to shape the way you think in general, having a podcast and going, cause that's all a podcast is you going public with your perspective and then you having to defend that perspective and developing an appreciation for other people's perspectives.

[00:57:19] So it makes you a more tolerant person and makes you a more open minded person and makes you someone who has a greater appreciation for other people who are doing things, whose opinions or thoughts you may not necessarily agree with. You may be a progressive or liberal person and you have a podcast and although you don't agree with a conservative type of person, If that person has a podcast, there's a mutual respect for what it takes to grow that podcast and to be in that character and to defend that perspective. You can start to look at all kinds of platforms and all kinds of personalities and you can glean insights. You can get tips and tactics from looking at those different platforms just because they're doing the same thing you're doing it, but from a different perspective. That's become really interesting as well. I look at a lot of content. I look at a lot of YouTube content, people who have podcasts, a lot of streamers. I listened to other podcasts and I'm not just listening to the conversation. I'm listening to how they communicate their perspective and how they may even bring on people with different perspectives and manage that and make it an entertaining conversation. So not invalidating someone else's experience. That's something you have to really be intentional about because you know, I'll bring on somebody who is talking about meditation in a way that I may personally not agree with or may not have an experience with, but I'm not going to get all up in the, in, in their face on the podcast and go, you know what? You're wrong. That's not the way meditation works. No. Instead you have an opportunity to learn through asking questions and being open minded because as the podcast hosts you're kind of a representation of your audience. And so you're asking questions that your audience may be wondering about whatever that person, whoever's your guest said, about that topic. So you're asking more from a place of curiosity than a place of interrogation.

[00:59:37] Because nobody really wants to listen to somebody get interrogated for 90 minutes. At least I don't want to listen to somebody being interrogated for 90 minutes. It's just not that enjoyable for me. Maybe there are people out there who do like to do that sort of thing, but I want to bring more positivity and inspiration to the world. So that's a part of my own purpose. And so when it comes to my podcast, I want to learn as much as I am helping to facilitate these, this exchange of information for my audience, for you all. I want to personally learn myself. And, you know, a lot of times because I've done the research prior to the interview. I'm not learning a whole lot of new information, but in those rare moments when I do when we do get to a part of the story that maybe wasn't in the research, but they, the guest goes there because they feel safe enough to do so, those are the really beautiful, really special moments. And if you're interrogating your guest or browbeating them with your opinion, those moments are going to be fewer and farther in between. They're not going to go there because they're not going to feel safe enough to do so.

[01:00:46] I like to facilitate that and that's what I encourage you all to do in your world, if you have a podcast, if you're thinking about having a podcast, or if you just like having conversations with people about different things, if you want people to go to special places, you have to make them feel safe in order to do that. And it's a lot of work and having a podcast requires many hours. It's probably the hardest thing that I've done in the last four years in terms of the volume of work and the amount of money I've invested in it. I think I've, I recently added up, I've spent almost \$60,000 in paying to produce the podcast, and just in my own time researching and, you know, taking time away from other things, but I would say that this has also been the most incredibly rewarding thing that I've done over these last four years, these last 200 episodes, learning about so many different moments in life, learning about the roadmap of purpose, having established really special connections with people who are doing amazing things in the world, people who are probably would never have had a conversation with, had I not had something of value to offer to them in the form of a podcast or a platform where they could share their story and their message.

[01:02:05] Just like being a keynote speaker or being an author, the more, it's one of those things, the more you do it, the better you become at it. So even if you don't feel like you're the best interviewer or the best listener or the best, whatever, in the earlier days as a podcast host, you become better over time from just the reps, just getting out there, having to do the research and having to ask the questions and having to be there and hold that space with the guest. So I highly encourage anyone out there who has even an inkling of inspiration to start a podcast or to keep your podcast going, to definitely lean into that, take the leap of faith that it's required.

[01:02:49] And just remember this other thing and I posted something about this recently that if you're looking at something like starting a podcast from your comfort zone, what the comfort zone is really good at doing is distorting the risk factors, distorting what you may potentially lose. Distorting how embarrassing it may be to have a podcast and all the reasons why it's not going to work, right? It magnifies the risks. That's what the comfort zone does. The comfort zone is that place that you're in without having put any sort of investment. In this thing that you're ultimately feeling called to do.

[01:03:28] Once you start to put some investment into it, once you get the microphone, once you record a few episodes, once you invest in a designer to help you with a cover for your podcast, once you publish the first six or so podcast episodes, the risks that you saw in your comfort zone before you did any of that are going to be significantly diminished compared to how you're viewing them from the comfort zone with no investment. And that applies to pretty much anything, anything you're thinking about doing from your comfort zone is going to be magnified. The risks are going to be magnified. And once you start doing them, it becomes less about what am I going to lose and it becomes more about how can I get better? How can I do this in a more efficient way? What are some other tactics that I can use to get guests that are more aligned with the format of my show and you know, things like this. And you start listening to other podcast interviews with a greater sense of purpose because you are in the same field and you can borrow tips and tactics that you hear other podcasters use, and that gives you a

different quality of attention. So you're not thinking about what you're going to lose. You're just thinking about making your product better, making it serve the audience more.

[01:04:50] And so that's my final word to you is don't pay so much attention to whatever the risks look like from the comfort zone because they're always going to be distorted and magnified and and that's why we end up talking ourselves out of doing a lot of things that we feel called to do from our heart. It's because we're looking at it from the comfort zone, which is the worst place to evaluate what the possibilities could truly be.

[01:05:18] So wishing you the best, in your endeavors with podcasting and otherwise, and we'll see you back here next week for episode number 200. Thanks so much for coming along the ride with me over these last four years and looking forward to many, many more years many, many more episodes many, many more amazing conversations.

Thank you so much for tuning in to this solo episode. Of course, I'll put links to everything that I talked about during the episode in the show notes, which you can always find at lightwatkins.com/podcast. And if you enjoyed this solo episode and you want to go to the main podcast and if you enjoyed this solo episode and you want to listen to other solo episodes, you can go to the main podcast page for The Light Watkins Show and just scroll down the page and you'll see a dozen or so other solo episodes that you can listen to about all kinds of topics and perspectives, mostly from my personal life.

And in the meantime, I look forward to hopefully seeing you back here next week with another story about someone just like me, just like you taking a leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. Until then, keep trusting your intuition, keep following your heart and keep taking those leaps of faith. And if no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you so much. Sending you lots of love and have a great day.

[END]