

EPISODE 205

LDV: *“My father was, what are you doing out in the middle of nowhere? You could be doing a residency in Mexico City. You have a house. What are you doing out there? And my mother was the same thing. Come to the US and get your US license. You're not going to face hardship and poverty. Where you're at you're not going to you're not going to make it. What is wrong with you? I could even retort to them, I'd say, yeah, you've got a point there, but I'm really okay where I'm at. It's good where I'm at right now. Maybe someday I'll leave here in a few years, but I have something to learn here and I don't know what it is. And I've been in cities and I know I don't want to learn there. I don't want to be hemped in by institutions and by the social society around me. And here I feel kind of a freedom I've never felt before.”*

[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've witnessed them in action, or Or people who've directly benefited from their work.

The goal of the podcast is to expose you to as many people as possible who found their path and to humanize their story. And after hearing story after story, hopefully eventually 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 does that has to overcome many of the same obstacles that you might be facing right now.

And this week I am in conversation with Laura Del Valle and her daughter, Angelica. I met Laura and Angelica back in 2018 when I hosted one of my meditation retreats at their beautiful retreat center in Nayarit, Mexico called Mar de Jade.

And I've been fortunate to host dozens of meditation retreats all around the world in the most stunning locations you can imagine. So I've gotten a chance to experience many fancy meditation, retreat centers, and I've also experienced some fairly rustic centers, but it's not often that you come across a place that feels as special as Mar de Jade.

On the surface, Mar de Jade just looks like your stock standard retreat center, right? It's on the beach. Check. The accommodation is comfortable. Check. The food is tasty. Check. The staff is friendly. Check. But a couple of days into the retreat, the first time they had an orientation with Laura and Angelica, the owners of the retreat center. And that's when I got to hear the backstory of how the retreat center came together. And that is what blew my mind.

So long story short, Laura is from Mexico. At first she went to Los Angeles to become an actor in her early twenties. That's where she was connected to a Zen meditation teacher through one of her acting classes, which just goes to show that no matter what what that next step is, it's always going to put you in proximity to the step after that. And so this Zen meditation teacher inspires Laura to leave acting behind and to become a doctor.

Shockingly, she took his advice and once she graduated from medical school, she felt called to skip the conventional path of medicine where she could have probably made a lot of money. And instead she went to work with the rural poor in Mexico, and that's what brought her eventually to Nayarit, where she opened up a clinic for the local fishermen and farmers. And it was just her and her daughter, Angelica.

And over those next several years and decades, the retreat center grew out of her little medical clinic. And she barely had any money and she was doing trades for chickens and all kinds of crazy stuff. And eventually her retreat center started to get bigger and bigger. And then groups started coming and going, wow, this is really beautiful. I want to volunteer to help you build this thing out.

Laura eventually started a nonprofit that included a school for the local children and a trade school for the older. Children to keep them from joining the cartel. And she also started a farm. So everything at the retreat center you found out was actually made by and operated by those locals who are all being paid a living wage.

And you could just tell that people were not just financially invested into this center, but they were also emotionally invested into the wellbeing of the center. And a significant portion of the yearly proceeds from the center are given to the nonprofit.

In fact, many of the people who come to Marty, how they come there to volunteer either in the school or the trade center or on the farm. And it's just a really special and beautiful thing to witness, the way that the retreat center engages with the community. And I love sharing these kinds of stories because it shows two very important things when it comes to being on your path.

Number one, you can never predict how it's all going to come together when you're first starting out. Again, Laura started out as an actor. There's no way in a million years she could have imagined herself being a doctor in the jungles of Mexico when she was sitting in that acting class, but she had to do that in order to be exposed to the next step.

Number two, if you keep service and giving back at the forefront of your mission, whatever that is, you're going to eventually look like a genius down the line because you'll end up getting back more than you ever gave. So I'm super excited to share this conversation with you and to introduce you to these luminaries of Nayrit, Mexico.

And without further ado, here is my conversation with Laura and Angelica del Valle. Enjoy.

[00:06:26] **LW:** Laura and Angelica, thank you all so much for coming on to my podcast. We've had a years long relationship of me coming to Mar De Jade to host my meditation retreats and one of my favorite parts of the retreat experiences like on day two or three when you hold a meeting and you give the back story of the center and you talk about the history and how you first came to that part of Mexico and how you created all of these wonderful initiatives. And so I want to take it even further back to start this conversation.

And Laura, just talking about you growing up and how you sort of became this activist who chose this very unconventional path of setting up a clinic in rural beach town in Mexico. So you grew up in, or at least you were born in Mexico City in La Condesa, which is where I am right now, coincidentally. Tell me what was it like growing up in this area?

[00:07:25] **LDV:** Well, let me tell you I actually have lived a very zigzag life. I grew up seven years in La Condesa. But in La Condesa, between tiding parents that got divorced, father with the custody. So at sometimes I was in La Condesa with my father that sometimes with my grandparents. Then my mother would take us off to Acapulco to the beach, and then we'd come back to La Condesa.

And then at 7, I spent seven years in Chicago from 7 to 14. Then I went back to La Condesa at 14. And so I've had La Condesa all my growing up in the different stages, and from 20 to 30, it was fascinating to be in La Condesa before it became popular. I think my the contrast between Mexico City and Chicago and neighborhoods filled with immigrants, Czechs, Jews, Puerto Ricans, Italians, everybody helping everybody.

And my grandmother, an immigrant as well, gave me a view that when I would go back to La Condesa, I thought, why are these people so snobby? Why are these people treating the cook the way they treat her? Why aren't my relatives here? You know, I understood the class system, actually having been raised in the conscious here by a grandmother immigrant who would help Braceros when she didn't have babies, who went through the depression, who went through World War II. My mother was first born there. She was the only one of six relatives that stayed in the States. Because she was a rascal and they were conservative. They all came back to Mexico in their fluffy little bubble. And my grandmother stayed and became a caterer So, I had La Condesa, which at that time was like a very nice neighborhood, with stable, upper class families.

And, I had it as a young girl where Mexican hippie and acting and excitement was happening. So it was delicious. Both cities totally different.

[00:09:27] **LW:** That's interesting. So you mentioned the depression and I know a lot of people whose parents or grandparents experienced the depression.

They inherited this kind of frugality in general. And I'm wondering, was that your experience? And then in addition to that, what sorts of philosophies or ideologies did you pick up from your mother and grandmother?

[00:09:50] **LDV:** Well, not only my mother and grandmother, my grandmother was one of the, this affects all of my having my grandmother's upbringing.

I mean, the years I was lived with my grandmother, when my mother got fed up with me, she was very tough. I mean, so I would go live with my grandmother and my grandmother was a creative spirit. She was brought up with very beautiful furniture. She final piece and she upholstered. We say we want this done. She get us the tools to do it. We were 8, 9, 10 years old. Her kids. We're the same age as my mother's kids. So they were both pretty attractive, active women, but feisty and alone. They did not like to be hemmed in. And but their kids were the focus that I'm going to teach them everything so they can land on their feet.

It was absolute independence. It wasn't pampering and nobody took you to school. You got there by yourself, you dressed yourself you made the food for the family. But my grandmother and my mother always hadevery kid in the neighborhood was hungry, coming over to eat. They barely made a living. They weren't educated. My grandmother got pregnant at 16, my mother at 17. What did they know? And whether they were working as a way of trust, telephone operator, translator, or court, or whatever, the spirit of sharing was always in your house. And that I learned from my grandmother.

And from my grandfather in Mexico, he was an old Spaniard that came at the time of the revolution as a Spaniard, 15 year old, on a ship. He never changed his car his entire lifetime. Cadillac, that lasted 30 years, impeccable. Never reupholstered his, I mean, the reupholstered, never changed anything.

Always, what am I doing for the next generation? He's got six buildings we're still all feuding about in Mexico City. Because he was what is going on for the next generation? I got my first money to buy here from my grandpa. I had a lot of money.

I was working as a doctor in Mexico City Hospital. We earned, like, peanuts, like, you know, 500 a month.

Both grandparents instilled in me, they were feisty. My mother was feisty, my father was conservative. He was feisty in his own personal way. But the grandparents faced political, social changes that were more radical. And they were independent, they were outliers and I think they inherited that to me.

[00:12:06] **LW:** That's probably as a young person. I'm talking like teenage, you're starting to now think about what do I want to do when I grow up in a serious way? What was your understanding of success back then? How did you relate to success when you looked at the lives of your mother and your grandfather and your grandmother?

[00:12:26] **LDV:** I didn't think of success as a teenager at all. I don't recall thinking of success. I thought what brings me joy and I was acting. I dropped out of high school. I didn't go back to high school until I was 24. I got into med school late. I was like six years older than most people in Mexico. But during those years, I did what I damn pleased. And in the States, it was the Beatles, Bob Dylan, you know, the Pops. And Mexico was the pompadour hairdos and the finishing school. So I never learned anything anywhere.

Painting in the yard and writing poetry and reading my favorite romantic novels and all this sort of stuff. So I had no sense. It was like I was in a dream and I went to LA to act and I was in place because I didn't like interviewing in LA. They always asked me to take my blouse off because I'm a girl.

Well, I'm walking out of all the interviews. I walked out. It was very buxom. And so I always was going to try to get a part of the Latino who was, you know, and I said, that's not what it's about.

I came to Mexico and I quickly found when I met 20, I came back to Mexico. My grandfather was going to die they told me. So I zoomed back to Mexico and I hadn't seen him for about four years. He lived 15 years more. He was my mentor.

And I got into theater in Mexico. And it was really wonderful, and it was wild, and it was protest theater, and it was surrealistic theater. But when I started meditating, I suddenly got surrounded by all the oddballs in Mexico. That we didn't fit into any system we reprogrammed.

[00:14:04] **LW:** What led to the meditation interest? I mean, acting doesn't really... How did that lead to meditation?

[00:14:08] **LDV:** I have come to believe your trust is in front of you and where they're shining the light, because everything I've ever done that's important. I've had a messenger. It said come this way, and sometimes it's a deep connection, and sometimes someone just says come this way.

With the acting with the meditation we're doing protest theater, and there was a French director called Khodorovsky who was doing very surrealistic movies in theater play, and one of the actors was in our group, and she said I said to her, you know what, really? I'm earning enough money on commercials, that's how I made money in Mexico, doing commercials. But I want to go somewhere, I've never traveled anywhere. My friends have gone on a backpack to Europe, of course, but I want to go to Japan because my brother's a karate teacher at the university and I want to learn, you know, he's always, oh, Japan.

So he said, oh, come to the center to meet this teacher, and he can tell you where to go. So he was the first Rinzai Zen monk in Japan. Now, Khodorovsky, this theater producer, brought him to Mexico. He didn't like the environment in the U. S. He ended up in Mexico, opening up a little Zen dojo.

And that's the one where he was filled with a lot of the radical people. I, myself, never experienced the 68 trauma of the mow down of students in the plaza of Socalo in Mexico City. But being surrounded by friends who all had a purpose suddenly made me feel like, wake up, what are you doing?

A fellow I fell in love with, I'm not talking about a very passionate diaphragmarxist, said, what are you doing to your country? How many people are you reaching with here? Why don't you become a doctor? And of course, I had such a crush on him.

[00:15:56] **LW:** He literally said that? Why don't you become a doctor?

[00:15:58] **LDV:** Oh yeah! Yeah, why don't you become a doctor?

[00:16:01] **LW:** To you specifically or to the group?

[00:16:03] **LDV:** No, to me, he knew I had a question. And I thought what is this message? I am totally in another world. I am in painting, poetry, and art. I skipped biochemistry in high school. I couldn't do calculus. I barely understood algebra. I was always a slow learner because I was switching languages as a kid. I mean, I didn't have a good foundation in that area. But then as I heard how passionate he was about creating laboratories in Oaxaca and here and protesting by bringing a band of Saan kids to play in the presidency. And they opened the doors for the tribe to talk to the president about the dam. They were gonna destroy the village. They were always doing schemes to protest. They were safer than getting shot down. You know what I mean? You bringing in the people. And I was just fascinated because. It was a real life theater of the drama going on around me. It wasn't written by a person, it was happening.

We both went our own ways, but I really understood that he left to me a precious gift because by going into medicine after meditation and after my years of you know, having my own freedom to see what I wanted to do in my heart would really fill me with joy.

[00:17:22] **LW:** Also, becoming a doctor will require you to finish high school. You enroll in college, take the MCAT or whatever that's called, go to medical school. That's not a passive, you know, track. You'd have to be very intentional. It's probably not that cheap.

[00:17:39] **LDV:** No, cheap in Mexico it was. The best university in Mexico. No, no, and it was like 200 a year. I didn't have money for books back then. It was all books and a book would cost like huge amounts, you know. One weekend of doing a Palmolive commercial. You know, my father would give me a little pension and my grandpa gave me a house. I put food on, I

always brought him a big bag of food every week because I was a bit proud and he said, you need anything? My grandpa would say, no, I don't. So it's been the intention.

And meditation of just staring at the floor. And then the staring at the floor with hardly any instruction, unlike the Buddhist teachers we have now, they give you all this long, me, myself, was with long verbal saying the floor and teacher, the floor and teacher, I had enormous emotional catharsis, and I was able to concentrate.

And so when they decided to pick up the learning, I was voracious about the learning. I was very detailed about it, you know, because I felt I didn't have a background. So I made the double effort and used the meditation as a tool of concentration.

[00:18:45] **LW:** So when you were going through medical school, obviously you were envisioning, okay, how am I going to serve as a doctor? What was your, what was that vision like for yourself?

[00:18:55] **LDV:** Well, I had an acupuncture background and I had background of fasting and juices and, trying the things that were supposed to be alternative to medicine way before I got into medicine. When I began working on the words, I would get scolded for reminding me for asking, what do you eat? What happened to you when this began? I would get scolded for being too extensive with my questionnaire. You know, stick out your tongue, let's see the color. So, I really was molded by what you call diagnosis by exclusion. I thought being a doctor was dealing with material reality. That was real. Acting was a make believe world of fantasy and it wasn't going to really affect anybody except little radical people that could see the injustice. It was just a little thin cap there.

But as a doctor, I could really, I had this fantasy of I was going to touch material reality and what is not what I imagined, you know, having been a teenager with a great imagination and kind of lived in my own dream world, to tell you the truth. I went over there, I was too too conservative. I came here. I was too liberal. I don't fit.

And so as a doctor, I would fit, you know, and I began to see that institutions were cost benefit. The bottom line is you can't spend that much time with anybody. The bottom line is the new director of the hospital hasn't operated in 20 years. He's been running a chemical company and he's going to operate on my patient. I was getting in trouble a lot.

Me and my best friend were kind of both like old school and we would really get attached to the stories with the people. And what really influenced me is that I would see that the people that came in and they were very kind of, there was a humility of spirit that was not which was what the general hospitals had. They were coming from the countryside with a fight for life. It was so hurting. I mean, one guy got shot in the plaza, in the square of the plaza by his friend who was drunk and he went on a bus from Acapulco all the way to Mexico City, holding his guts. And I said, how is it possible you got here? His wife was waiting to sign. I knew I couldn't pass out. I passed out at that.

And another one, I saw cases after cases, and I thought, why didn't he get treated over there? Or why didn't she get treated? How could this woman get to this level of cancer without anybody intervening?

And the truth is it was not only that the outskirts system was bad. But that the beliefs in hospitals were terrifying. You go there to die, you might obviously go at the very end of something, you die. So people didn't want to go to hospitals, and I did see a lot of people. And what impacted me was the courage people had, and the kindness, and the gratitude. And I was working at a hospital that was for the poor. It wasn't a private practice where they're demanding this and that and they have money to do everything, you know, so I thought to myself, I'm going to go work out and I had two things that were kind of contradictory.

I wanted to go out and work for the poor and not necessarily categorizing poor, just the money. Yes, poor money, the great richness, and dignity, and generosity, and humor, and forbearance. You know, that's at least the impression I got in my 20s of these people. But on the other hand, I am not going to work for a government institution, and that's the only thing that's out there. I go out, and the first one I worked for didn't have running water, didn't have light, was all rusted. I'm supposed to deliver babies with in the dark. I rented a house and then they accused me of private practice. I rented a house by myself with my little salary with electricity and running water and I've got all kinds of problems at the health department.

What was I running? I said, come look at the shop you send me to. You know, I'm solving a very serious problems, people with machete wounds, people delivering with bring a bucket of water or something. So I thought, I'm not working for an institution. And right from there, my first time I went out to Yucatan, and I was on a beach, it was beautiful.

I said, I got to go to the beach, but I was here. And that was before Cancun and Playa del Carmen. This was in 79. And I went, I thought it was a matter of fact, I met a drummer, a U. S. drummer, and a Mexican politician, and the three of us were going to do this project. He was going to get the land, and we were going to run this program. And Playa del Carmen had just a few hammocks on it. We paid 50 pesos to sleep on it.

Anyway, I said, here, I want to work with rural people. But I don't want to work for an institution. So I have no idea what I'm going to make money out of.

[00:23:45] **LW:** Did you recognize even now looking back any of the skills that you learned as an actor or going through that process that we're now serving you well as this young upstart doctor in the Yucatan? Was there any correlation between what you did as an actor?

[00:24:05] **LDV:** That's an interesting question, Light. I think you learn on stage to listen and improvisation and reacting. And I think that was something it was very useful, because I had always an outpour of I just talked to a doctor this morning about it. She's kind of in the same situation I was 12 years ago. She said, I'm getting burnt from all this that I'm hearing. And

being able to listen, and then being able to guide the person back to themselves, as my daughter says about school and kids.

I've learned that from her and her ability to raise kids without guiding back to themselves. I actually, inadvertently with acting, would guide the person back to, well, this is what you can do. This is what can you do about this or that? What feels good to you? What do you want to do? And I have to really break it down to a very simple language, you know. What it means to live with advanced diabetes, you know, like a pump, the sugar, the hypertension, I have to put it all in metaphors of the community.

And the acting part leader, I learned to use in trauma to release people. We would have them enact being the powerful one when they had been vulnerable in clinic. Because when I had the clinic here, I had the time to, there was a lot to do, deal with all the patients. The medical students, the residents, half understood the language. I'd had to go through all the charts. So I would pass them on and train my health workers into kind of psychodrama re-evaluation counseling in where if you had been raped and you had to put the arms around someone and have it burst your arms and say, nobody's touching me that I don't want to touch me and that was much more effective than hours of talk. You know, the physical sensation of, I'm powerful enough to buck anybody up that I don't want to touch me.

Or, I can push my mother in law out of the door because she keeps opening the curtain every time my husband and I make love. My father, her husband and the mother in law would open the curtain to the room, you know. I have all kinds of weird cases where I say, okay, do what you really hear now.

Do what you really want to do with your mother in law. And now because of my mother in law, we're acting, we're playing. Just play at it. She almost, I was the mother in law, she almost pushed me out of the balcony. And I said, do you still live there? Are you still living with your mother in law? No, I moved out because he wouldn't leave his mama. I moved out and he moved in after me.

So a little acting went much better than the actual therapy. Which is a turtle, if it's not a dinosaur, you know, so yeah, I think that was, and I still is my love of psychodrama.

[00:26:55] **LW:** Yeah. Okay. So you eventually ended up in Chakala, which is in Nayarit you had a clinic and you also have this retreat center. So I'm not sure if you went there to open a retreat center and you did a clinic on the side, or you opened a clinic and the retreat center just kind of happened. Give us a little bit of a montage of how that all came to be.

[00:27:17] **LDV:** You know, I think when you're in love with helping, not because I'm a good person, because as I helped, I really got helped. I mean, the people that were suffering so much more than I had suffered in my life. I mean, I had my wounds, from my mother, from my father, abandonment issues. My mother was really tough. There was no whack if you didn't do

something. I was brought up in a kind of like bizarre group of adults that you have to be on your toes to see what was next kind of.

And as feisty as they were kind of hard on the kids. And on the other side, it was the opposite with father and grandpa. So the coming here was a bit like somebody I met in Yucatan said, come visit Nayarit and I fell in love with the jungle. The guy on the beach next door is telling me that I saw it. So I didn't really know what I was going to live off of.

My first challenge was I walked into this road, which bumpity and 45 minute ride. I saw the beach and I said, Oh, this is it. Because I was always into cooking. I was always into experimenting in my youth with juice fasting and that kind of thing. And I thought, well, what am I going to do here? And as I said, this is it. And things started working out and I'm invited. People to join me because I didn't have the money to buy the land and I figured I'll go to the U. S. and work six months to come back to them.

[00:28:44] **LW:** How were you making money, by the way, off the rural poor? Were they like giving you fish or whatever they were out catching that day to pay you for their services or how did it work?

[00:28:52] **LDV:** I think, well, it worked. I often got roosters and I put them on the back of my truck and the rooster was there by the time I come home. I didn't know, roosters, chickens, fish.

And I actually never asked for much. And I actually never wear a white robe, and I actually found out that they didn't quite like allopathic medicine.

And the fact that I pressed and touched their back, their side, their pain, it was more than a local curandera. They looked at me more like la señora de las agujas, the lady of the needles. They had never seen acupuncture. So they thought I was, some people thought I was voodoo. And I had, I could put evil spells, other people came to take away those spells. And I quickly realized that nobody, when I really saw something I did not want to deal acupuncture because it wasn't enough. I mean, there was somebody that really made a captive pearl or whatever, because you had a huge, they come down from the mountain with 210 blood pressure over 110. I knew that was a person that was ready for a cerebral accident, and they didn't have the money to sustain it.

And I found cancer in the PAPs, and I began to see things that needed tuberculosis resistant medicine, which there wasn't any in Mexico. I, again, the same people that introduced me to Chakala, was a Danish guy and his Norwegian girlfriend went off to San Francisco, and I said, God, I'm gonna starve to death here. I can't charge anybody. I said, you can't charge anybody a penny. Come up to San Francisco and work. We'll get you work. So I went up and stayed at their house in San Francisco. So I say, it's peculiar, because you know how I met them. They came to the village, the Mayan village where I was working, because they heard there was somebody with needles, and he was having a headache every time he had an orgasm, and

they were all very, both of them were very concerned. I put needles on them, and it just went away. And well, they were working for National Geographic, so they took me everywhere on adventures, because I was a little too timid to explore the Lackandonne jungle in both ways on my own, you know. And then they led me here, then they led me to San Francisco.

So I think people in your life come for very specific reasons. And not always what you think they can't find it's to open up a path of where the true self is, where the true reality is.

[00:31:13] **LW:** I love that.

And what assumptions had you made about working in the rural poor that turned out to be maybe not the case?

[00:31:21] **LDV:** Oh, I decided everybody was really noble. Like the people I saw in the hospital turned out to be a lot of real crooked people. A lot of really, I mean, I was just shocked the amount of disrespect for women and children, you know. I was shocked at the betrayal, certain people in the village against the whole town.

[00:31:41] **LW:** What would their motivation be? Was it just this sort of machismo, or is it something deeper than that? Was it like a narco type of thing?

[00:31:48] **LDV:** No, back then there was no narco. I mean, there was always selling marijuana fields, you know, there were marijuana fields, but even the governor allowed it because a farmer could earn a lot of money from kind of that as a marijuana field, and everybody was dealing marijuana.

[00:32:07] **LW:** Ego, egotistical type of thing.

[00:32:11] **LDV:** Well, what is it that makes people corrupt anywhere? What is it makes people adore possessions and things? You know, they give more reality to things than being. That it's very a female and it's the sense of self being worthy because I have this and I have that and, you know, and my family is, it's this mind, it's this ego concentration of the mind. And so you end up with people that um... And they're the people that are sheep. They have to follow the leader or they get in trouble.

[00:32:43] **ADV:** Also, recognizing the history of colonialism in Mexico, and how that shapes societies and pits. People against each other, and especially those with a little bit more this whole area where Mar de Jades used to be an enormous plantation and this not that far back and the stories that some of the older folks will tell about going against the foreman et cetera, it becomes very dangerous.

[00:33:10] **LDV:** The foreman were worse than the owners. The owners didn't even live here. They would hang people in Las Vadas from trees if they took coconut and sold it to somebody.

Or if young men talked back and said, I don't want to do that. And I had a nightguard, she remembers him, he played the violin and the thing, and he remembered the plaza where people were hung from the trees.

And the foreman were people that were had enough of a mean streak to go against their own. And I think it's kind of an inherited thing when you think that you have to subdue the next generation through violence because don't get in trouble with a foreman if you don't.

And I found that when she went to school the teacher would hit the kids. She's going to be afraid to go to school. I just use it to scare them. You know what the mother said to me? If you don't hit her, she's not going to learn respect, and she'll hit you one day. She hasn't hit me yet. She tells him, mom, get back.

[00:34:07] **LW:** So we just heard from Angelica, who's Laura's daughter.

And I remember from the orientation of the land that in the early days, there was just like one room where anytime you went into that room, you came out pregnant.

And anyway, Angelica comes on to the scene, right? And you're now a new mom and you're in this rural area and you're not making a whole lot of money. Obviously, being a mom sort of shifts things a little bit where you gotta, you have to provide for your family while you're doing all these other things. So talk a little bit about that transition as a mother while being an activist, while wanting to be on this mission, while inviting people to come and contribute to the development of Mar de Jade.

[00:34:54] **LDV:** You know, I wasn't on purpose an activist. Only when the situation came up that I found unjust would I act. And a lot of times it was more the one-on-one situation. And I remember when I was pregnant with Angelica, I never lacked food. Everybody brought me food. We didn't have electricity. There was no bills to pay. I basically learned to live without money until practically the last month where I went back to the States to deliver her because I never even checked myself out. I didn't know if she was a boy or a girl. I can say my hope is a boy, but I kept seeing patients. And I remember one patient that had urinary guide that had urinary incontinence, large prostate problem. And he was really suffering. He was a tourist. He was an older man and he was in such pain and it was so hard to get out. And there was no, so they brought him to me and I really needled him to death to just create. You know, urinary, with the help of the incontinence, he began urinating and he said, you know what? You're having a girl.

I said, yeah, why? The girl, you're having a girl because the world needs more women like you and she's like, she's coming. I didn't have an ultrasound. I had the guy tell me, you're having a girl because the world needs women that care, you know? And he was right. He was right. And during the whole pregnancy, I practically lived without a penny. I lived in a little cabin, the pregnancy cabin. We had to, I can't even remember, we had to boil the water. I had kerosene lamps. I had mosquito nets over the bed. I once had a big snake hanging over with my big belly

like this. And I called the one of the gardener that came, I said, God, get rid of the snakes! Get rid of the snakes! It's over my child's belly. And then he finally got rid of the snake and the next day there were bats. So the snake was there to eat the bats. I was always learning. How do you live in the wilderness? The whole time I always have food all the time. They bring me fish, they bring me pozole, they bring me this.

And then was it before the pregnancy, I started to work. I started to work a few months in the States in a clinic. First as a waitress, because I wasn't licensed. And then I went and interviewed at a Latino clinic in the Mission. And with a guy who the executive director had empathy for me. He said, why don't you take your exams and be boarded in the States?

I said, the States doesn't need me. My country needs me, where I'm at needs me, it's not even my country, it's these people here, I don't care what country it is, these people need me, and I need tgem.

[00:37:26] **LW:** Did anyone try to talk you out of what you were trying to do and say you're, wasting your talent, you should be making way more money. We're all doing so well. What are you doing down there?

[00:37:38] **LDV:** My father was, what are you doing out in the middle of nowhere, you could be doing a residency in Mexico City, you have a house. What are you doing out there? And my mother was the same thing. Come to the US and get your US license. You know, you're not going to face hardship and poverty. Where you're at you're not going to you're not going to make it. What is wrong with you?

[00:37:59] **LW:** What would you say in response?

[00:38:02] **LDV:** I don't recall that I ever, that I could even retort to them, I'd say, yeah, you've got a point there, but you know, I'm really okay where I'm at. It's good where I'm at right now. Maybe someday I'll leave here in a few years, but I have something to learn here and I don't know what it is. And I've been in cities and I know I don't want to learn there. I don't want to be hemped in by institutions and by the social society around me. And here I feel kind of a freedom I've never felt before.

And also, I also talked a lot of healing. People think, oh, what a good person, you're an angel, I'm an angel. I had a lot of wounds that I had to heal. There were a lot of confusion in my heart. And then I had, a venue through love to care for people. And so it became much more important than having a mate than having a house with kids.

And, you know, all that other lifestyle just didn't attract me, you know?

[00:39:00] **LW:** And Angelica, what do you remember as you were a young kid in those early days of Mar de Jade, as everything was sort of coming together?

[00:39:08] **ADV:** Well, it was incredible because we didn't have electricity. We didn't have running water. I don't have a TV. I remember the first time I saw a TV, I must've been like 10 or 11. And I was like, what is this sorcery? And we just climbed trees and I grew up. I'm an only child, but I grew up surrounded by kids. It was a very small community. And also, my mother was la doctora, the doctor in town.

And so I remember one time a man came in late at night with a huge gash across his leg. And there was no one else but me and her. So she's like, all right, you hold it together. I'm going to suture it. You know, it was always kind of peeking into this adult world of service and also getting a chance to be a kid in nature, play around and be connected in that way to my environment.

[00:39:58] **LW:** And you all you were requested by this Sufi group for them to come there and have a retreat. Was that when it officially sort of became a retreat center? It stopped being just a home where people would come and visit and help out on the land, and it became like an actual business?

[00:40:16] **LDV:** I wouldn't say it ever became a business. It was officially a retreat center. I didn't know for 30 years how many tomatoes came in and how many tomatoes went out. I mean, it was the least, it just sort of handled itself, even in crisis time. I mean, I just really believe when you're on the path of searching, when you face the abysses in your life, there's something happens that everything helps you to do it. You're not doing it. Like art, sometimes people say, I didn't write it, or I didn't paint it, or I didn't compose it. Some energy, something bigger than me helped me do this. And I don't know what it is, but I want to cultivate it.

[00:41:00] **LDV:** When I came here, I would go to the States, make a few bucks, bring medicines down on the truck. She and I were always driving, little toddler in the truck, you know, all the way from San Francisco, driving down, getting to Sinaloa. Sinaloa, dangerous parts, coming here. But having that point, somebody said, you know, why don't you take med students? I said, no, med students wouldn't survive here. I have nothing here to offer med students.

A lot of it has to do with personal relationship. If I can't offer people, I offer them my personal support through whatever they're going through. Because I remember one guy that couldn't get more than he was dying of cancer. And he was in agony and the acupuncture wasn't helping. And I remember just sitting and meditating with him. And when I went to retreat. I didn't move from the pain in my knees thinking of him in the moment I accepted the pain it disappeared. So there was I learned from the patients. He had no way out of his condition. A lot of people have no way out of their condition.

Wat do I need? I'm healthy, I have a beautiful kid, she's growing up in nature. The retreat happened on their own. I went and Sufi danced, because I don't know who I met, and I shared some pictures of where I lived, and immediately, oh, can we have a retreat? I said, I don't know. We have a dirt floor. There's no electricity. I said, I don't know how many people.

[00:42:25] **ADV:** They would take turns doing the dishes. It was more like a camp.

[00:42:28] **LDV:** And everybody, the med students were 10 to 15, they'd clean. They would interview a person, not just his body, his whole life. Whereas his poverty is much more complex than I'm physically ill. They're throwing me out of my house, my kid's in jail you know, I don't have money for something. I can't eat this stuff because I don't even know how to plant it. It really opens you up.

If you are with the most vulnerable, it opens you up and you start thinking, God, are we spoiled. For God's sakes, look at these people surviving, and it happened, I mean, so because I've come to a point, not that I understood it then, I didn't understand where the hell I was going and how it was going to happen, and I had no strategic plans, and I had no master plan, and I didn't even imagine this.

People say, oh, what a visionary. First of all, I'm half blind and I lived in a dream world. So it wasn't a visionary. Little by little, responding to what was happening, it started to grow. And responding to people as people, not as, not clients, not as the institute. Now we're going the full circle. We've got to keep track of what we're doing because it's too much. We've got to have software systems and reservation systems. We used to write it all by hand. Call up and say, yeah, you're welcome to come in the check would come after they left. And at the clinic, there was no phone lines, but I mean, just let it all happen. Get out of the way. And if you have the love of beauty and harmony and creativity and compassion, and the whole pot of ingredients going on, because you've been stimulated to respond to life. But then it happens on its own. I am always in awe I'm thinking of someone that I haven't talked to for four or five years in the colony.

Or I just this group, young man, there's a really wild part plants, mushrooms in the, I couldn't get a hold of it. Mushrooms, growing our own mushrooms and he shows up. He's coming. So I think, it's just such a symphony of people here that come and so many that want to help that it gives me absolute trust in humanity, in spite of the contradictions and the paradoxes of the ugly, people that are still so wounded that they have to wound someone in order to be someone, you know, but they have to conquer to be someone. You don't conquer anybody for God's sakes.

[00:44:54] **LW:** One of the personally most inspiring parts of your story is how you all have integrated the community into the building of this retreat that you have. So it culminated in this nonprofit, the MDJ community project.

So Angelica, can you talk a little bit about the genesis of that, how it came to be and what all you all are now doing with that project?

[00:45:19] **ADV:** Yes, absolutely. I mean, when Mar de Jade started, it started as you've heard as a clinic. I mean, it was never intended to be this master plan for a resort retreat center. And so everything growing from there makes more sense within the ecosystem that we have now,

because this really be it's not really a business. It's a way of life. And it's something that is in communion between the land, the people and what our efforts are, create something more powerful than just a business. And in that sense the clinic that my mother ran for 25 years, offering free service for all the local farmers and fishermen and the community was the kind of the genesis of this. And then as she retired from medicine, we shifted our focus a bit more towards education and skill training for young people.

So right now, what that looks like is a primary preschool through middle school Montessori Waldorf inspired community school in Chakala in the town where the retreat center is and that school started in 2013. So 10 years ago, and we've grown subtly every year multiplying our grades every year. So we have now 80 kids and we scholarship all of the local kids to attend the school. This was born out of a very personal need for educating my own children. So there's also that involvement in that way.

And then simultaneously to that we've had since 2008 an organic farm because again, this kind of understanding of the land and what is healthy for us in our bodies and for the Earth is coming to this point of self sustainability and going towards organic, non toxic, growing our own food.

And so we have this organic farm, we have the school, and then about five years ago, coming back to this sense of building everything ourselves, as my great grandmother, my mother's grandmother always inspired her to do. And bringing that into the ethos of Mar de Jade was well, it was always there from the beginning. It's let's make it ourselves. We're in the middle of nowhere. We're in the boonies. We can't buy anything. And before free trade in Mexico, it was really hard to get, you know, a lot of imports and things like that. And so we would kind of make things ourselves.

We had a carpenter who worked, his father worked with my grandfather in Mexico City. And he and his wife came to Mar de Jade as a young man, and he worked with us, and he trained a lot of local men in carpentry. And they eventually, and they built everything at Mar de Jade, everything that's wood. So that same model and spirit, we actually transferred it to the farm in that location and created a trade school where we have young people from 18 to 29 who take a year long trade workshop can be carpentry, food processing, maintenance, sewing.

And we're opening now a bakery and organic farming. And so this school allows most of these kids have dropped out of middle school, high school, they have children to support by 18 or 19 or other family members to support.

So this is an opportunity to learn a skilled trade, finish their GED equivalent and have a better opportunity at life than what their original circumstances presented them.

So right now, those are the projects that we have going on with Mar de Jade, it runs in harmony and in synchronicity with the kind of retreat aspect portion of it, which has now

become more business like in the way, in the logistics and the details and the manner in that we conduct our relationship with our retreats and our guests.

We try to be more efficient in all of that, but at the same time, that funds our community projects. And the big portion of our revenue goes directly to funding all of our community projects, which, you know, impact around 120 students in total between the two educational projects. Plus we have we employ around 100 local staff.

So we have kind of a small operation. Big for us, but it's something that is just completely interwoven with the community and with the spirit of what we're doing. As I said it's a way of life beyond anything else.

[00:49:35] **LW:** What is the charitable budget that it requires to run the school and the trade thing and the farm and all of those, all those things on a yearly basis, just to get a scope of what you created there?

[00:49:47] **ADV:** Well, the operating budget of the school is around, oy, you caught me off guard here with the numbers, but yeah, I believe um, no it's, it's not even that much. It's around 300,000 a year, for example, for the school and at the trade school, our operating costs of the teachers in each trade is lower than that.

But it's more than the operating costs, the investment, you know, because we've really built up a lot of capital investment in both projects, the land so we've purchased the land we've put the infrastructure in, built the workshops and did all of the equipment. So we've kind of steadily been investing in this framework and in the buildings themselves to house the school and house the trade school in addition to the farm, which has also been, it was an abandoned school, abandoned piece of land. So the soil is really degraded. So nurturing the soil and kind of bringing organics into the midst of this agricultural space all around us where no one else was organic and so all of you know, of course all the plagues want to come and feed off the delicious bounty that's organic and not sprayed.

There's just been a lot of back work into building everything up way beyond the kind of annual operating budget of keeping the teachers employed and the lights on.

[00:51:11] **LW:** And you were educated, you went to university in the States. And so you were obviously exposed to the American dream. And I know when I grew up in small town, Alabama, I couldn't wait to get away from there honestly. What is it that brought you back, Angelica? I mean, did you inherit your mom's activism by necessity trait? Or what was it that lured you back to good old Chakala?

[00:51:34] **ADV:** Well, I also couldn't wait to get out. I mean, I think it's a natural impulse as a young person to seek what's out there. And growing up backtracking for a second, I went to the local school, which was one teacher for six grades, slapping us with a ruler if we were

misbehaving. And it was really like, old little House on The Prairie kind of thing, but not so romantic.

It didn't really matter to me because I was surrounded by med students. I was translating since I was young at the clinic. I was going back and forth to the states. I had a lot of education outside of the classroom. Eventually, I did a year abroad with our meditation teacher, him and his wife. They offered to host me for a year in the Bay area to go to school. And I jumped, I was 10 years old and I was like, take me, I'm going. Because I knew there was something else out there that I need to experience. And it was fantastic. And I learned so much. It was, I was like, oh, this is what school is supposed to be like. All right. I'm actually learning things. And then after that, I was like, I need to go to a real school.

So through lots of sacrifice my mother was able to send me to a bilingual school in Puerto Vallarta and I finished my middle school and high school there. And then I went to college in the States and there I was exposed to yes, the American dream, but also it was a really diverse college. I had people from all over the world that I made friends with. So I realized once I was a senior and trying to look at what was going to do. Everyone was taking consulting jobs at McKinsey and I was like, Ooh. So I said, you know what? I'll go back home. I'll help my mom out. I'll help with the business and we'll see what happens. And maybe I'll go back and do a Masters after that. And I came home and I never left. It's been almost 18 years.

Sometimes you think you're going one way and life is like, yeah, come on over here for a little bit. But it's really been such a gift because this is how I grew up. And so it comes naturally to me to believe in what we're doing and this way of life.

And then I had my kids and for them, what a better place to grow up than on this little beach town with safe and beautiful in Mexico. And it's also a very big playground. We didn't have a school for my kids. I was like, all right, let's build a school. And so growing up in this environment where anything you dream is possible, you don't know how you're going to get there, but you're going to take the first step and you're going to trust that the next step is going to become apparent and that the right person's going to show up and that the right circumstances, because the direction is worth following.

So I think I just kind of fell into that flow and I've been there since. And at this point I'm more in charge of kind of the business admin aspect of things at the retreat center and very much as well with the school, but we have people kind of running it's a big pie, there's a lot going on.

So we've managed to kind of split it up so that we're all kind of focusing on different areas a little bit more.

[00:54:36] **LW:** And Laura, when you look back at the last, I guess, nearly four decades of this project that has become Mar de Jade, what are you most proud of?

[00:54:45] **LDV:** My daughter.

[00:54:48] **LW:** I was going to say, with the exception of your daughter, with the exception of your daughter, what are you most proud of?

[00:54:50] **LDV:** I was drowning before she came back. I was like, I can't handle this place. I can't handle it.

[00:54:59] **LW:** That's a given, it's a given that you're proud of her, but just about the project itself, what are you most proud of?

[00:55:02] **LDV:** Well, occasionally I get a kid come up to me in the trade school. She says, do you remember me? You remember me? I went to the kids club at the clinic. Or there are kids that never thought of going to college, who after a year of the trade school, and I invite college kids, we get like 10 college kids coming for four months or six or five and different things. And I make them teach what they learned in college the kids that are barely going through the high school on Saturdays that we teach, and now there's like three or four in college, and still have their job. They take Saturday college. They were inspired by seeing other young people leading the workshops and teaching them what they learned in college. I said, you can't just have them work. I want you to give them theory. You've got to have the horse and the buggy is heavy because it's a theoretical part. A horse can go ahead and do things, but they have to learn to have a clear, like my daughter does, a clear vision picture of what are the immediate pieces, the later pieces, et cetera, so that they can actually become independent.

So this is what I'm most proud of is that by combining different levels of young people and then older people that come in and teach and their mentors, the kids open up the world immensely. He's realized that they don't have to be either a radical cartel guy to get money, or I'm always going to be picking up boxes and putting them on a truck for peanuts. They suddenly get a certain sense of self worth. And because I was a troubled youth and I see that, and I see this is the kind of school I would have wanted to go to in high school. It took hands on. But then, after I get my hands in the dough, tell me how I do it. What are the ingredients? How do I make it? How do I fix the machine?

So all that part of the everyday reality mixed in with the influx of what are you here for a simple dignified life? You have to have ethics. So I'm proud of kids that I see managed to do the train, not all of them, and some of them will lose, but I'm seeing more and more kids saying, if I do this year, can then I go to college? Or I say that they can work here. You can only work here if you finish high school. I don't want anybody that hasn't finished high school here. So like four kids who are going to high school, they were just stuck with washing dishes or doing menial work. I said, are you going to do that all your life? I don't want anybody like that. I don't want losers. So they're doing it.

So kind of the influence of a youth village and having the youth that that gets the hang that we're not just there to teach a trade. We're there to open hope.

[00:57:42] **LW:** And if you could go back to young, 25, 26 year old Laura, finishing up medical school and give her some words of wisdom in one of her dreams, what would that look like knowing what's coming ahead?

[00:57:59] **LDV:** Oh, that's the mystery. You don't ever know what's coming ahead. You think you want that and you end up with this and you're much better off with it. You know, I would say to myself, prepare for a few lifetimes in hell. But don't forget heaven. Heaven's always in the person you have in front of you, even if it looks like the worst person in the world. Look at what's good in them. Forgive people for everything. They don't mean that cruelty. They really screwed up when they're that cruel. They've got a lot of insecurity, a lot of pain.

And I think I would have warned me that it wasn't going to be without falling into deep emptiness and solitude and despair and okay, do it. Don't be afraid of falling and I tell that to the kids. Now, don't be afraid of falling. There's always getting up again. There's always. Something new beyond your loss. Don't nourish whatever hurts you. Nourish what gives you hope. So that's kind of what would I tell myself? Now I look back and I see all the time, what is it that allows any human being to work with the vulnerable? It's around vulnerability. Be vulnerable. Don't put such a hard core around your heart and your social programming. Cast it out. You can't be free till you cast out all the programming.

Society has got a really toxic programming in these modern times. It's about getting, succeeding, competing. Forget that. We're no lone rangers.

One beautiful thing is that I love, I just recently I heard it. Ubuntu. There was an anthropologist in an Africa. Have you heard of it?

[00:59:34] **LW:** Tell the listener what that means.

[00:59:36] **LDV:** This anthropologist, as I recall the stories in an African village with a whole bunch of kids that he wants them to learn competitive sports. And he puts a basket full of fruit under a tree. And he says, when I blow the whistle, the first one to get there is going to eat all the fruit.

And when he blows the whistle, much to his surprise, all these kids, hand in hand, like 15 kids, walk toward the basket and share the fruit. And they're saying Ubuntu. So when he says, what is Ubuntu?

If I eat, everybody eats. This is the heart. This is a human heart. Real heart. And that's the heart that every day heart. We call that primitive, right?

[01:00:23] **LW:** I have a retreat coming up at Mar de Jade over the new year. And I've been doing those maybe every couple of years, so that's an opportunity for people to come and experience what you all have created.

But if someone can't make it to that retreat for whatever reason, is there another way for them to come and have a direct experience at Mar de Jade and check out the farm and the trade school and all the wonderful things that you all have created.

And I know there's opportunities to volunteer as well, but just talk a little bit about how people can experience what you've created.

[01:00:58] **ADV:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, there's so many ways to visit Mar de Jade and we really like to think of it as kind of like this coming home. Right? So even if you're coming for the first time or you're returning, you're coming home. And there's so many ways to connect. So you can come to a retreat like yours, which is a fantastic retreat. I've witnessed it. And I think it's wonderful. I encourage everyone to join.

And also that we host about 80 retreats a year. So this is really kind of the, what we've gotten into is hosting retreats. And we have all the conditions for that to be smooth, beautiful process. And so you can join any retreat. You can also just come on your own. You can come by yourself. You can come with a friend, partner and just hang out and visit the projects or just hang out on the beach and do some hiking and some yoga. And also you can come volunteer.

And so in the volunteering, you can participate at the trade school and the organic farm, learn Spanish. And you can stay that, stay for a week, or if you want, you know, a few months. So it's an opportunity to really dip your toes into the community, get your Spanish and experience it from a different perspective.

[01:02:04] **LW:** Beautiful.

[01:02:06] **LDV:** And I'd like to add that the real dream at the prom is a residential meditation yoga with periods of working with the kids. And we're setting up that people can come for a week or 2. I just had a woman who's had 40 years of a gluten free bakery in Oregon wanting to come show us how to do gluten free. She's the one that's criticizing of the gluten free desserts are not up to par. It's a very standard Mexican baker who throws tons of this. So she's coming I have a woman has won the James Beard award chef in a group of Oregon who wants to go today to see the farm because she wants to come and learn and teach, learn Mexican food and teach Haitian food.

So people, particularly everybody has a talent that they can share and this is very vital what we were talking about volunteering. The rates are very low to volunteer. You can stay at the farm, you can stay here a week before your retreat, a week after, because it really opens the heart of the one who thinks he's giving.

I once very quickly tell you I, I saw an interview of a woman that came out of one of the southern states with a very bigoted where there's a lot of white supremacy, and she was advocating and creating programs to get people out of white supremacy. And when the interviewer asked her, how did she make the turn?

She said, well, I got out of this little town into a big city. And I realized what I taught, what I was taught was a matter of fact of life was not at all was a really tedious thing. It wasn't till I lived in Detroit. I can't remember where she lived. But I suddenly realized the world was much bigger than the mentality in the time I lived and it's I have to do that for others because it's totally uncomfortable.

And I mean, this is kind of the essence of what we're doing, you know, open up when volunteers come. The world opens up to people because what they thought was absolute reality turns out it's bigger than that. You don't have to fit into that mold. You can fit into things that are more kind, more empathetic and more productive.

[01:04:13] **LW:** And what's the website?

[01:04:15] **ADV:** mardejade.com. It's all, you can all find it on mardejade.com. Mar de Jade means sea of jade is Spanish. That's M A R D E J A D E . com.

[01:04:27] **LW:** Is the little sea they're called Mar de Jade or you guys just came up with that name for it?

[01:04:33] **LDV:** I dreamt it.

[01:04:34] **LW:** You dreamt it?

[01:04:35] **LDV:** I believe in dreams.

[01:04:36] **LW:** So you woke up and you were like, Midehadeh, that's the name, that's it.

[01:04:39] **LDV:** No, I was in sticks, no water, mud around me, dust around me, snakes around me, and I had a dream that the ocean was jade green. And then I looked around and there were, there was not a lot, not just a few huts there. There were little red huts all over the place. And I was out in one place with a bunch of trees flowering, and I had white hair and I lied down. I assumed to die with a great joy of being part of these flowers and fruits.

And I woke up and I said, oh my God. I said to my sister, I dreamt of the ocean, so sparkling jade. And then I got to be really old and everything was flowering. Maybe they should be Mar de Jade? I thought, it's too soft to coin, you know, she said, I like it. And I was reading Aztec book of the Valley of Jade.

In Aztec was in woman, it was the passion of their heart for the hurt. And in men, it was the courage. They put a disc. So simultaneously, something cued me off. And in the Orient, Jade is a stone that is hard, but can be molded softly, so the hardness of life and the softness, you know, the strength and the vulnerability and the courage and the passion, you know, the

symbolism jived. And it somehow, it was not my dream, and it was the dream that, wow, what is this? What is this ocean like that? So that's why, as a matter of fact.

[01:06:09] **LW:** Thank you so much for sharing that story. I think that's a really great way to wrap it up. And I highly encourage everyone to go to the website and see if there's anything that intrigues you to come and visit. Like Angelica said, you can just come on your own.

And in the meantime, I look forward to reconnecting with you all in person in December.

[01:06:31] **LDV:** Look forward to seeing you. And you're wonderful retreat that always brings joy and light and maybe don't wait until December and come volunteer in the projects before then.

[END]

Thank you for tuning into my interview with Laura and Angelica Del Valle. You can follow their retreat center on the socials at modern day hot day. That's M A R D E J A D E underscore retreat. And as Angelica said, you can always go there on a solo trip. If you're ever looking for a gorgeous. Center to come to, and relax and renew. You just fly into Puerto Vallarta and it's about a 90 minute drive from the airport. And I'll put links to the center and everything else that we discussed in the show notes, which you can always find at lightwatkins.com/podcast.

And if you enjoyed our conversation and you found it inspiring and you're thinking to yourself, man, I would love to hear light interview someone like... Shoot me an email with your guest suggestions. I can't promise you that I'm going to be able to bring them onto the podcast, but if they sound like a great fit, then absolutely. We'll reach out to them. My email is light@lightwatkins.com.

And in addition to that, one very simple and easy way that you can directly help me get those bigger guests onto my show is just by leaving me a review. That's one of the reasons why you hear podcast hosts like me always saying to their listeners, please rate and review the show is because that's how those bigger guests will gauge whether or not a podcast is going to be worth their time. By looking at how many reviews that podcast has.

And from your end, it only takes you 10 seconds. It's absolutely free. All you do is you look at your screen, you click on the name of the show on your Apple podcast app. Scroll down past those first five episodes. You'll see a space with five blank stars and just click on it. Just click the star all the way on the right if you want to leave a five star rating.

And if you feel inspired to go the extra mile while you're there, write a one line review just saying what you enjoyed about the podcast and that's it. It goes such a long way to help me get all of the guests that you suggest onto the show.

And if you want to watch these interviews on my YouTube channel, you You can do that by going to YouTube and searching The Light Show and you'll see the whole playlist there.

And if you didn't already know, I post the raw, unedited version of every podcast in my happiness insiders online community a day early. So that is episode comes out on Tuesday. And if you're the type that likes hearing all the mistakes and the false starts and the chit chat at the beginning and the end of the episodes, you can listen to all of that by joining my online community at thehappinessinsiders.com.

Not only are you going to have access to those Unedited versions of the podcast, but you'll also have access to a bunch of challenges and masterclasses for becoming the best version of you.

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. And until then, keep trusting in your intuition. Keep following your heart. 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 very much. Sending you lots of love and have a great day.