

**Podcast:**

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* What comes to mind when you hear spiritual wellness? Crystals? Chanting? A Himalayan retreat? For a lot of us, it feels vague or even intimidating. But spiritual wellness doesn't have to be abstract or out of reach. In fact, it might be closer than you think. I'm Lindsey Whissel Fenton. In this episode of *12 Degrees*, I'm talking with Elisha Tichelle, a somatic therapist, ritualist, embodiment, educator, and assistant teaching professor at Penn State, about how creative expression, nervous system regulation, and establishing intentional rituals can help us connect more deeply to ourselves and our surroundings. Together, we explore some simple ways to bring meaning, rhythm, and a sense of sacredness into everyday life. No incense or chanting required, unless that's your thing. Elisha, welcome to *12 Degrees*.

*Elisha Tichelle:* Thank you for having me.

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* On your personal website, you describe yourself as an enlightened academic. What does that mean? Or what does that mean to you?

*Elisha Tichelle:* It's kind of tongue in cheek. I just was like in this academic gung-ho-ness. And then, at some point, I had all of these awakening experiences and just more and more, this spiritual life and this way of living more holistically came to the forefront. And so, it's just my way of really honoring both this spiritual side. But also, I am an academic, and I do actually really love the rigor and the rhetoric and the weirdness of being an academic.

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* I struggled with where to categorize this interview, because there's so much overlap in your work between the different degrees. How would you explain the close link between all of these different areas of our wellness?

*Elisha Tichelle:* You know, I really see it as like different doors into the same room, but ultimately, it's all towards well-being. And at some point, it all becomes the same room. It just kind of depends on the way you do it, the way you organize it, what you're most interested in and what aligns you to your deepest self.

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* One of the doors that I feel like we are most reluctant to engage with it, is that spiritual door. And I'm curious how that plays out in reality and the clients you work with?

*Elisha Tichelle:* Well, I think firstly, in one of the ways that we're just naturally afraid of the unknown and spirituality brings up a lot of the unknown, right? And so not everyone feels as comfortable working there. That is not a problem for me. I think that even if the way in is more physical or more tangible, more concrete, that doesn't make it any less sacred. It just may not be what that person calls it. They may not call it sacred. That doesn't mean I don't see it as sacred. What I think really helps us to come into our own optimal way of living is tapping into that deeper, creative, sacred flow within each of us. And, it has two sides. There's an

## 120: Holy Shift: Finding the Sacred in Everyday Life

embodiment side and an expression side. If you were drawn towards creativity or artistry or other outlets like that, you may have tapped into a little bit of that side. And I tapped into that side very early, and it still took a lot of work and a lot of support and a lot of time to be able to sit fully inside of myself as an embodied, regulated creature, you know. So, I think that what I'm interested in is how do we come into our relationship with our core self that wants to be inhabited and known, so that we can express and create and give to the world parts of ourselves. And then being able to share that, whether that is through a painting, through a dance, through a book, or through a conversation in a coffee shop, I think artistry and creativity can happen all over the place, but it is that willingness to tap into what has been our experience, what gets metabolized into our own medicine for ourselves that begin can be offered as an inspiration to another.

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* One thing I think of when I think of spiritual wellness is the idea of ritual. Can you talk about the role ritual plays in your work and in how you come to this embodied, connected spiritual wellness?

*Elisha Tichelle:* Well, I think the first thing to note is that we're ritualistic beings. We do it all the time, every day. And that part of bringing it into our spiritual being is to be conscious of it, to be intentional with it. Ritual is a way of creating connection, bringing together an integration of all of our parts. And I think our spiritual rituals are about bringing into tangibility or embodiment the unseen, the unknown, and to have a way of expressing that energy or that feeling state with action. You know, just having a simple gratitude ritual where you're just writing or speaking... all of these things that many of us do, but we maybe just need a little umph with it to bring it into sort of like full ritual status. But really, there are no rules. It wants to look like you. It wants to feel like you. And it wants to support you.

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* So, one of our goals for *12 Degrees* is to connect people with real life strategies that can support their wellness. What is one strategy that people could start doing today, tonight that could help nurture their spiritual wellness?

*Elisha Tichelle:* So, I think the best rituals really mirror nature. They mirror the cycle of the sun and the moon of the day, in the night, and these ways of kind of opening and closing. So, I think following the moon cycle can be helpful for a lot of people. You know, if we think about ourselves as an energy being, and so if we think about the moon cycle going across a month, noticing the difference of your energies. So, there's a lot of ways we have different types of cycles in our body. And, in many ways, learning to work with the moon cycle helps us to start listening to our own body cycle a little bit more. So, if you just start tracking the new moon in the full moon and you notice, how am I? And we have all of these cultural myths that really, the lore is true in some ways, right? Like that's crazy around the full moon and doing sleeping and all this stuff and. Well, and that's because the energy is different. But if we learned to pay attention to how our personal energy changes within that cycle, you might find some ways of like even working with your schedule, like just with that idea of the moon. It's like it goes dark sometimes, like it just retreats, and it needs to be completely offline. And I think we could take maybe a little note on that and, and maybe not use the whole month to be like schedule,

## 120: Holy Shift: Finding the Sacred in Everyday Life

schedule, schedule. There are certain times of, of a cycle that I'm like, "Oh, this is not the best time for me to do something. I'm going to be lower energy. I'm just not going to be as full." And so, for me, I think that learning to work with the moon cycle I think that learning to work with the moon cycle helps us to start listening to our own body cycle a little bit more and work with our own energy. Keep us more regenerative and sustained rather than burning out and overriding our system.

*Elisha Tichelle:* And I think that following the sun cycle can be helpful. And we've had some new research that's come out in the last few years around this being up with the sunrise or getting sunlight. The first 15 minutes that you're up is so good for the system. And so, I would say, yeah, if you can't get up at sunrise, if that doesn't work for you, if you can get sunlight in that first 15 minutes, let your body get charged up by the sun, do a little bit of breath work with the sun. That can be really, really helpful. And then, as we go through the day, we keep opening these tabs just like we do on our computers. We have all these tabs open, open, open, open. And then we come to close the day and then we're like, I'm supposed to let it go and rest and renew. And one of the things we do is we keep all these tabs open all the time, and just having a ritual of closing your day could allow you to close out all. Those little tabs. So that your body and your spirit can fully rest and then begin again the next day. So, I think, most of us sunset is not when we're kind of stopping our day, but maybe just some acknowledgment that, like there is some shift in the energy of the day completing and maybe I can move a little slower, even if I'm still gonna be working for another six, seven hours. But maybe there's a way of even acknowledging it's a little different for me. Often, if I'm going to work, I like put fuzzy socks on or something, or maybe just change the lighting up and let it be a little bit more dim, or light some candles, or just kind of offering some kind of change to my body that, okay, we still have things to do, but also it is time to think about the day as is completing.

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* That seems like such a helpful framework for structuring our ongoing routine around a lot of degrees of wellness. Is there a more immediate practice that you could give folks to...I don't know what you want to call it...center themselves, kind of connect in the moment to the spiritual side of their personality, whether or not they want to label it as the spiritual side of their being.

*Elisha Tichelle:* Yeah, Quick Heart Coherence is like the best tool ever. It's created by HeartMath and we focus on breath. So, your breath is one of the odd anatomic aspects of the body that we can partner with. And so, if we pay attention to our breath, something automatically begins to happen in our physiology and our emotions and our mental body. So, pay attention to the breath. And we're going to imagine that that breath could move in and out of all of this amazing electromagnetic activity in the heart. So, we're going to focus our attention into the heart space. And you're just going to your breathing naturally, but maybe a little bit deeper, a little bit longer imagining. So, we're now activating the imagination, imagining that the breath could move in and out of the heart. And you can name something that you appreciate. You can remember a time that you were cared for or nurtured. You can think of some things that you're grateful for. So, we're going to activate some type of higher consciousness feeling skills. And you're just going to do that for like 1 to 3 minutes. And what's crazy is 3 to 6 minutes of Heart

## 120: Holy Shift: Finding the Sacred in Everyday Life

Coherence can actually boost your immune system. It can help re pattern your cells. It helps with anti-aging. Like the studies around it are crazy and it's super simple and it's really, really effective. The other quick technique that I always use a shake the body. So, this one is for when we're like more agitated. And this is probably going to come up in like emotional wellness as well. Physical wellness. Often these tools that are overlapping in these twelve aspects, those are the ones that we know are going to be giving our kind of our whole system a reset. So even if you're shaking because your trainer told you to offer your shaking because your therapist told you to of your shaking and like it's your ritual is still do you do it's like, oh, it's hitting all of these parts of me, right? It's really helping. So, shaking the body is an amazing.

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* Those are some great tools. Thank you so much for your time, your energy and your insights, Elisha.

*Elisha Tichelle:* Oh, you are so welcome. Thanks for having me on.

*Lindsey Whissel Fenton:* That was Elisha Tichelle, a somatic therapist, ritualist, embodiment, educator, and assistant teaching professor at Penn State. I'm Lindsey Whissel Fenton. That's it for this episode of *12 Degrees*. To learn more, you can visit [wellness-dot-psu-dot-edu](http://wellness-dot-psu-dot-edu). Also, be sure to like and follow this podcast so you don't miss any of the upcoming conversations that will help you adopt healthy habits. Until next time, we wish you good progress on your wellness journey. *12 Degrees* is produced by WPSU in collaboration with the Penn State Ross and Carol Nese College of Nursing. This podcast is intended for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical or mental health condition. Please consult your physician or other qualified health care provider immediately if you are experiencing any suicidal thoughts. If you're in crisis, help is available for free 24/7 in the US by calling or texting The Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988. More information is available at [988lifeline-dot-org](http://988lifeline-dot-org).

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]