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## 5 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

Speaker3

Speaker4

Speaker5

## START OF TRANSCRIPT

**[00:00:00] Speaker1**

Good morning, Wellspring's, and I hope you're staying cool today, wherever you are, the hot one. You know, I think for me, one of the neatest and most unexpected mysteries in this life is the way that some moments just get seared into your brain, even moments that you don't expect. Right. There are times in life when we're ready with the camera, the big moments that are memorable, the graduation, the weddings, the births, the state championships, the opening nights. Right. But then there are these little moments that just sneak up on you and sometimes stay with you forever. I had a conversation like that when I was 22 years old. I was fresh out of college and had just started my first full time job where I worked for a nonprofit in Washington, D.C. We were trying to improve the health care system that served low income residents of the city. There was this patchwork system that had grown up of free clinics and church run shelters and all these little programs that tried to provide affordable health care to communities that had been left behind in the city over time. It was totally perfect for young, idealistic me, right. It was this fighting the good fight kind of job. And I remember early in my time there, standing around the office one day and talking with our policy director, a guy named Charles, we were talking about a problem in the city government. And I was coming up with all these ideas just left and right.

**[00:01:43] Speaker1**

Right. About what they should do to fix this problem. And Charles was listening to me patiently at first, but increasingly getting exasperated with me because he was rebutting all of my ideas by trying to explain to me that they were not realistic. They simply weren't going to happen. The agencies we were talking about didn't have the funding or the staff to implement any of these ideas. There were no systems in place to share or even collect all the information that they would need to make that happen. And after a little while, I sort of got indignant with him. And I remember I said something like, well, aren't they supposed to be the ones responsible for our public system? Right. They need to get it together. And I remember that his demeanor and his tone of voice kind of shifted in that moment and he sort of stopped the back and forth we've been having. And he said, listen, Lee, if you expect everything in this world to work the way it's supposed to, you are going to be in for a very, very rude awakening. I didn't like Charles very much in that moment, I remember, and I probably stormed back to my desk and felt like he was the one being jaded or cynical, but he was right. If we expect everything in this world to work the way it's supposed to. We are in for a very rude awakening.

**[00:03:16] Speaker1**

And in the 15 years or so since it turns out, I think back to that conversation a lot, I obviously still remember that moment. I think about it every time there is a conflict between the world, as I imagine it could be. Right. The whole and beautiful and compassionate world that I can see where everyone is cared for and things work out as they're supposed to. And then this real world that we live in, where our time is limited, our resources are limited, where we are flawed and make mistakes, and we are so frustratingly eternally forever human things don't always work the way they're supposed to. And maybe it's strange to say so, but I think that was the first moment in my life where that actually sunk in, where I realized this world is full of situations and circumstances that would break my heart and piss me off and that there were things that were flawed and things that I could not fix. As we grow in our lives, I think this is one of the ways that our loss of innocence happens as we grow up and become adults, we have this gradual realization that all of the grown ups around us are not somehow magically injected with perfect knowledge at age 35 or something. Right. And on some level, we are all just making it up as we go along. And my first message in this series that we're doing from Heirloom Connections, I quoted the author and journalist Courtney Martin as she is someone who has written extensively and researched these connections between the different stages of our lives.

**[00:05:18] Speaker1**

And Courtney talks about remembering very keenly when she was in her teens and her 20s, how she studied adults, she said, particularly women at midlife, women in their 30s and 40s and 50s. And she says, I was awed by them. I was just amazed by all that they were juggling. Surely they had superpowers, she said, or at least really good spreadsheets. Write highly coordinated systems for running their complicated and busy and important lives. And surely they woke up each morning knowing exactly what they were doing and executing with finely tuned precision. And that was all waiting for me someday. She thought how odd that when we are young, we think that's what being an adult means. We think that's what real life and arriving there means. It means perfection or having it all seamless routines and fulfilled plans and storybook endings. You don't have to live very long as an adult to know that the real life of adulthood is much messier than that. So for our last message in this Heirloom Connections series this month, where we have taken a glimpse with their permission into the conversations between five different pairs of video pen pals here at Wellspring's pen pals who were paired across the generations in this last message, I'm going to share with you some insights from two different conversations we had to video pen pal pairs who crossed the different stages of adulthood.

**[00:07:03] Speaker1**

Specifically, there's a man who is thirty four who was matched up with Tina, who is 69. And then there's Julie, who's 51, who corresponded with Ron, who is 80 to from across these different stages of life. They talked about so many things. They all shared memories from childhood and adolescence. They talked about the impact that family members had had on their lives. They talked about the goals that they had that they reached and the ones that they didn't quite get to their most fulfilling friendships and relationships. But what I kept noticing in these conversations, especially between adults of different ages, what I kept noticing was the way that their lives took these unexpected twists and turns and how much the things they never planned, that they never set out to do ended up affecting who they are today. There's so much of our adult lives that is shaped not by the way we think things are supposed to go, but how we respond to what actually happens. Nan had a moment, actually, in her conversations with Tina, where she echoes Courtney Martin's words about being a kid, looking up to adults almost exactly. Take a moment to listen as Nan and Tina discover that they actually had a common career interest in counseling. But listen to the way that that took their lives in very different directions.

**[00:08:42] Speaker2**

When I was growing up, I was always. I was always kind of treated like a small adult, I grew up in a home where. We really don't have a lot of rules. We didn't have time. We don't really have parameters on what we're supposed to be doing. We just happen to be pretty good kids. So we worked out for my parents. I grew up I always had a pretty good relationship with my mom. And as an adult, like I said, we're very good friends and I've been always really good friends with my mom's friends. And so I always joked with Ian, who I'm sure says hi to you, by the way. I always joke with you and I'm sorry, Wellspring's. I'll take those personally, but I would always joke that Wellspring's was kind of my perfect place because everyone was older than I was. That's kind of my preferred age group. Not everyone, but a lot of people were. And I just I have a lot of friends who are older than I am, and I have a lot of friends that were younger than I am. I also like kids, but I like people my own age, too. But for some reason, I've always just gotten along really well with. I was going to say with adults, but I guess I'm one now too, who doesn't feel that way all the time?

**[00:10:01] Speaker3**

I don't know if you know it, but I had I went to to get a Masters from Immaculata in counseling psychology, but I never ended up being able to use it, because you also might know that my husband died when my kids were 10 and 13. And, you know, shortly after that I pursued this degree. But then when I was done, I realized that I couldn't make enough money. You know, I had a mortgage and everything. I couldn't make enough money as a as a therapist or counselor. And instead, I continued to do what I had been doing. When I graduated college. I was trained as a teacher and I did that for three or four years. And then I realized I wanted to work full time because most all the jobs I had as a teacher were like some long term subs and stuff like that. So I. I went to school to be a paralegal and I studied employee benefits. And then when I graduated, part of the deal with that school I went to was that they found you a job. So I got a job and it was a Jenkintown, but I ended up doing administrative work, for profit sharing plans and pension plans. And that's what I've been doing all these years. That was in nineteen seventy eight that I went to a paralegal school. And all the way up to now I'm still doing it right now. I only work very, very part time, like maybe 15 hours a week. And you know, I only work three days a week. So I have a couple of days off a week. And so that's been a good thing. And I've been able to pay the bills that way. I could, of course, counsel now because I don't have as many demands on my salary or money at this time, but. I'm not sure I could break into the field at this late date and, you know, I'm not really sure I have any desire to market myself or build a resume or any of that business.

**[00:12:19] Speaker2**

I really enjoyed hearing about your internship experience and some you said, but your supervisor was a hard driver, but that you learned a lot from them and that's that's something I feel like that's a I learned really well under people like that as well. And it sets the bar high, you know, like you really get the chance to learn from somebody else's expertise. And it sounds like especially because you were serving maybe medically underserved patients or patients with Medicaid. Really, to get them the services they needed, you had to write those notes in a specific way and be really detailed. That's something I wish I had a little bit more guidance in my job right now. My job is very independent and, um, I like that, I like that I'm in charge of my own time and there's a flexibility and no one watching over my shoulder. And I often wish I had somebody to take a look at my stuff, too, because I'm new and I always know what I'm doing. Actually, I rarely know exactly what I'm doing. I'm kind of just making it up as I go.

**[00:13:37] Speaker1**

You know, this craving that man talks about for just a little more guidance and that vulnerable feeling like she's kind of been thrown a little bit in the to the deep end in her work. I think that feeling is what's behind a new word that we're hearing a lot nowadays. Adults think, right. You might have heard that it's sort of the idea of the word adult, but as a verb and you may hear it when people are describing those parts of Grown-Up life that are not so fun. Right. This is not the stuff we dreamed about as a kid. This is the stuff that nobody wants to do, like going to the DMV and waiting on hold with the insurance company or going in for your mammogram or your prostate screening or cleaning out the gutters on your house. Like not not the dream, right. Not not living the dream when somebody says, I don't want to adult today or I can't adult today. Right. They're often talking about those kinds of responsibilities and tasks that are unavoidable. But I think there's also a subtler meaning lurking behind the popularity of that term adult thing. That's not just about the tasks that people may not want to do, but about that whole mindset that we've created around what it means to be an adult around that whole mindset, that being an adult means we have it all together and know what's going on, that we don't make mistakes anymore, that we don't let things fall through the cracks.

**[00:15:08] Speaker1**

Right. That we handle our stuff. That's the definition of an adult that I think we sometimes get exhausted by, because as my old coworker Charles pointed out, it's not necessarily realistic. We can't live up to that all the time. It's not what adult life looks like from the inside. Courtney Martin reminds us that even the really successful adults do not always have their act together. She says you have all the plates spinning even in those good moments, but then the kids get sick or you forget your friend's birthday or you crash your car and you remember that you are indeed human and fallible and just like every other adult. And it's disappointing. It's heartbreaking even sometimes. But Courtney says the good news is that it means you are needed. It means you're needed. I don't mean needed in the sense of one more responsibility. I mean, your presence is needed. Your care is needed. Needed the way a friend is needed in this life. In that sense of recognizing that we have our broken, leaky spots, all of us, but we also all have Hands. To help each other plug those leaky spots and stop the bleeding. Adulthood gives us so many gifts, according to Courtney, that are way better than the promise that we'll finally get our act together. Adulthood can teach us how to give a truly heartfelt apology, she says.

**[00:17:01] Speaker1**

Or how to think in spectrums instead of either or binaries or how to master the art of picking Basil without killing the plant. There are a million little ways to be an adult and nothing to do with meticulously following the perfect path. That's laid out before you. And they have everything to do with being able to find hope in difficult times. Or just remembering that the hard times don't last forever. And everything to do with continuing to wake up on another day and show up for this imperfect world. Adding to it. With your own unique and growing self. When I watched Julie and Ron's conversations, I was most moved by these stories. They both shared about how the important people in their lives showed up for them, and I was moved by it because those stories did not unfold like the perfect fairy tale. They did not happen as either of them would have planned. Now, Julie and her husband, Young, have a beautiful, sweet love story, and when she shared how they met with Ron, Julie realized that she didn't know how Ron had met his wife, Carol. I realized I didn't know that either. Listen in, as Ron describes. They're long and winding path into the beautiful partnership that they have today. And then listen, as Julie shares her own story of a time that she never would have wished for herself, but that strengthened her marriage with Young.

**[00:18:58] Speaker4**

I married Loretta in 1960, we had two children, Misty and Greg, in the early 60s. My job was in chemical sales with the Firestone Plastics Company, a division of the Tire and Rubber Corporation, which was based in Pottstown. I was selling primarily PVC resin to the flooring and coatings Industries. My sales territory was in Chicago. Where I spent most of the 1960s. Actually, I enjoy flying to Minneapolis, then great city. I was promoted back to Pottstown as a project manager for the flooring industry, for all of the United States and Canada. About the same time. I think, Carol, about the same time as husband Steve accepted a job with the Tire and Rubber Corporation in Pottstown, and Carol got a job there as well. Laura and I met John Smith and pottstown, who introduced us, introduced us to the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of pottstown, we liked it and we joined and were quite active. So around nineteen seventy two, seventy three, I was transferred to the film industry division of the plastics company from the chemical side where I was to become a product manager, heading up a new product that my then Carol had been transferred up to the sales department and the film and shooting division. That's where we met. Interesting, after a few years of getting to know each other, at the end of the day, I ended up in her office where she and mine and we would just sit and talk.

**[00:21:19] Speaker4**

We would share family stories. We even discussed religion and politics, sometimes heated. By the. We became good friends. But later but the later 1970s, both of us were having. We were experiencing marital problems. Steve was transferred to Tennessee and Carol chose not to go. They divorced and Carl had custody, too, and it was some. I was traveling a lot and my wife was not being very responsible as a mother and enjoying a. Enjoying a mutual male friend, so here comes question 10, if you could live your life over again, what would it be? Well, 1978 qualifies. I have moved into a. I moved into a new house we designed. With six acres of woodland, a few years later, Carol and I separated and I had custody of our children. She didn't want custody. You mean you mean Loretta and Loretta and I separated in early 1980. I filed for divorce. I lost my job. My father died. My son developed testicular cancer and. Carol moved in with me, with her son, and at that time, aged 14, my son was 16 and daughter Misty, 18, wasn't always positive. Carol and I married in September. We share it. We shared a strong sense of responsibility and bright minds, good cooks and lots of love. We really enjoy living in the woods, sharing with deer and turkeys and other animals, and especially just being in nature. Last September was our fortieth wedding anniversary.

**[00:23:58] Speaker5**

So when I had Albert. That first year of his existence was probably the hardest thing my life as as you probably know, you know, having an infant is just very physically emotionally taxing. And for me, it was especially hard because I did have postpartum depression, which. Meant that I basically wasn't sleeping at all and was just anxious the whole time and. A. So me spending all of my time and energy taking care of Albert was was the best time of my life and the worst time in my life, and that it was just so difficult. And but at the same time, my husband, Young, stepped up and really took care of me. I'll never forget when we came home from the hospital and, you know, I was basically in bed trying to get rest and he would like bring me my meals, you know, three meals a day, gourmet meals, and basically did everything, everything possible to help me. I was nursing. So obviously he could do that. But there were times when he, you know, I would pump and he would basically be up for half of the night bottle feeding Albert so I could try to get rest. And then he'd go to work for eight hours the next day and, you know, I'd be home with the baby. So he was a blessing. And, you know, if I had to do it again, you know, like again, it was it was the best time in my life and the worst in my life. So but obviously, I'm so happy I had Albert and had that time with him.

**[00:25:52] Speaker1**

You know, Julie and Ron both have stories about a time when something messy and hard finally broke open in their lives and someone else's hands were ready nearby. To plug those holes and hold the broken pieces. Until those broken pieces could be knit back together again. After sitting with these conversations this week and all of the conversations in our series from five years old, all the way up to 77 and 82, actually, Ron, I wonder if this model of thinking about adopting. Thinking about adopting as an ongoing practice, not just about trying to live up to some ideal. But living in reality. Accepting and resting in the way that things really are, I wonder if this is a healthier model, not just for us grown ups to internalize, but also for us to teach to the next generation. We can think of maturity not in terms of how well we fit into a shiny, competent mold of an adult, but in terms of care. In terms of respecting that there's a balance in life of giving and taking, learning and growing throughout every day of our lives. Maybe adulthood and maturity is not ever supposed to be something we arrive at. Maybe there is no magical day when the world stops and we are finally supposed to have it all figured out. I think that the even better and much more hopeful truth is that that journey never ends for as long as we live. We just keep learning. We keep getting better. We keep growing our heart and finding new ways to bring kindness and flexibility and repair where it's needed. And the hopeful part of that, of course, is that it's never too late to keep growing.

**[00:28:09] Speaker1**

So, friends, may you practice your adulting today and every day with grace and compassion and with gratitude for what you have learned and for all the growth that's still to come. Amen, and may you live in blessing. I invite you to take a moment if you're comfortable, maybe let your eyes foreclosed and relax your shoulders and join me in the spirit of prayer. God of our growing and changing and living hearts. There is so much that happens in our life that we never planned for. There are so many things that come up that we never expected and never would have wished. I hope that we can remember that we are held in all of it. That there is no mistake, no choice we can make. That will set us so far away from the possibility of love and healing and growth that we will never reach it again. May we remember that that is not who you are? That a God whose other name is love is defined by that unsurpassable power of loving, of loving, even the unforgivable, of loving the lost and the isolated, the ones who are not sure how they'll ever get to a place they want to be. And constantly calling and offering new opportunities every day. New opportunities to grow, to take something from where we've been. And to encounter helping hands, open hearts and kind people who are out there for these prayers that I have spoken this morning and for the prayers that everyone gathered with us is carrying on their hearts, we say amen.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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