

# Gen Y Shift™:

## Kerena Saltzman & Soren Gordhamer (Dec. 3)

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Ben: Good evening everybody or good morning, good afternoon depending on where you are in the world, pleasure to be back with you again. This is Ben with the Gen Y Shift Series.

Yeah, very happy for this week's instalment, have a great brother sister duo with us. So we'll jump right in. I think it's going to be an hour pack full of heart wisdom goodness.

So we got Soren Gordhamer here. He's the founder and host of the Wisdom 2.0 Conference which is the annual event exploring living with awareness and wisdom in the technology age.

He's also the author of Wisdom 2.0: Ancient Teachings for the Creative and Constantly Connected and a regular contributor to the Social Media blog Mashable.

He's led mindfulness programs in a wide range of settings and is project director for Richard Gere's public charity, Healing the Divide. He organized the Healing through Great Difficulty Conference with his Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Soren, it's great to have you with us. Thanks for being here.

Soren: Thanks. It's great to be here, man.

Ben: Awesome. As well as your sister, Kerena Gordhamer Saltzman who is a licensed therapist, trainer, seeker of truth, mother and founder of the business Through Insight, which provides individual and group counseling to twenty-somethings both in person and via Skype.

She's trained therapists and coaches in utilizing both Gestalt and the Enneagram and is passionate about translating psychological and spiritual teachings to the next generation.

Kerena and Soren both facilitated a workshop together at Esalen for twenty-somethings on discovering and walking your authentic path. So Kerena, thank you, too, for being here.

Kerena: Yeah, it's great to be here.

Ben: Awesome. Now, I got to say this is fun. This is the first time here at the Gen Y Series we've done a duo together. So I'm excited. Three heads is even better than two.

Kerena: Totally. I was wondering how it would go, you know.

Ben: Exactly. I thought it was a great foray into it with two people who know each other so well that it'll be easy to bounce off of each other.

Kerena: Totally.

Ben: Yeah. So what we like to usually begin which is the fun place in getting to know you is I'd love to hear about each of your path into the work you do. As people who are up to very conscious empowering things in the world I'd love to hear about your path into this conscious work.

Kerena: Do you want to start, Soren, or you want me to start?

Soren: I can start. We both grew up in west Texas in a little town called Lubbock which was a college town in west Texas. Our family is a little bit odd in the sense that my mom was really into yoga, my dad was really into like actually going to visit Esalen.

They're like eastern philosophy and eastern thought. That was in the middle of a town where just about everybody else was more conservative Christian.

So for a young age I always felt like I was always asking about what spirituality mean and what does religion mean in part because I got so many questions from the kids who I would go to school with about why we didn't go to church and what our beliefs were.

So I think from a young age I think both us where this whole kind of issue was somewhat drawn upon us. In my teens after I remember my parent's divorce having a big impact on me and feeling like I didn't know the word "suffering" at the time. I just knew as I had a lot of pain and heartache and grief and sadness.

Then once I began to study and read certain books and listen to certain tape I really felt like, "Wow. There are actually teachings that talk about

suffering.” Then also talk about this word “compassion” which I’ve never really heard before much.

That started a bit of a journey for me in terms of reading everything I can and listening to everything I can from different teachers and eventually going to live with us when I was 19 for about a year and a half and joining a global environmental walk and writing a teen book eventually called Just Say Ohm which is a little bit of Nancy Regan’s Just Say No.

Kerena: I never heard that before, Soren. That’s great that part of it.

Soren: So that’s a little bit about how I just felt like I got on this path. I spent a lot of my 20s traveling, hitchhiking across the country a lot. Four years where I didn’t pay rent. I lived here and I lived there and I spent a year of that walking across the state in Japan and Asia and different countries on this environmental walk.

For me, the journey really kind of began from feeling the suffering as a teenager and then really beginning to inquire as to what would relieve that suffering. There’s a lot more I could say, but I’ll pass it over now.

Kerena: Okay. I think that growing up in west Texas like there’s people who are listening that are in places that are really isolating. Growing up in the Bible Belt, I think it had a huge impact on just the level of isolation that I felt and we felt as young people.

There was paradox that we were steeped in all those like spiritual psychological literature. I mean every book that has ever been written on it we were introduced at a really young age to different ways of seeing the world like Joseph Campbell’s work and mindfulness.

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There was just a lot around our growing up, a lot around our environment to support alternative ways of being. So that felt like a big impact. For me, I became more interested. I probably had a little more of a sort of normal whatever normal looks like journey.

I spent some time at Esalen when you were there, Soren. I ended up really finding sort of psychological community of people that I became really interested in Gestalt work and doing that kind of work.

My interest was more on the psychological side and my involvement in the spiritual side of it really became through you guys because at the time I was visiting my brother. I don't know if you remember this Soren, but they had a couple of teachers. I think it was Steven Levine and Ram Dass.

On the weekends, we would drive in this little car to go see these different spiritual teachers. Through you guys I kind of got turned on a little more to that world.

So long story short, I ended up really grounding myself probably more in the psychological end of it, getting really curious about that work and then sort of opening more to the spiritual side.

Ben: It feels like the many threads of both your stories that could be picked apart and talked about for hours. So maybe we'll get to some of that as the conversation goes.

What I'm drawn to actually as I hear both of your stories is it's one thing and we certainly had people on who are just leaders in the world and are up to amazing things and had insights to share from a conscious place.

There's something special to you two who are both now felt drawn to work with twenty-somethings. I'm curious if you could speak a bit about what it is that has drawn to work with the Gen Y age group and what brought you to that.

Soren: Should you start, Kerena?

Kerena: Yeah, I'll go. About three years ago, I had a daughter. I had a therapy practice and I was really looking at who am I enjoying working with because I chose to really bring my time down. It was the millennial folks that I was working with and I was really jazzed and excited about.

I think part of it for me was my own path in my 20s is getting some practices and just getting turned on to some different ways of being and thinking during such a huge transition. For me, it changed my life and I could see these guys who were so open and so wanting support and wanting to just engage it and not having a path and just wanting support on that path that really got me lit up about working with twenty-somethings.

Also really starting to look at these guys are in a whole different framework than what it was when we were in our 20s. The problems that

they're facing are just different and how can I or we support them in translating some of what we know so that they can have that at an earlier age.

Ben: Nice.

Soren: I've had mentors and teachers that have had a huge impact on me. I feel like there's a real important place about sharing teaching from a place of I know and let me tell you all the answers to life. More of a way of sharing the path that I've taken and the lessons they've learned in their experiences.

So I've always had huge value in having people like that in my life. As I began to get older, I remember when I was in my 30s I did a lot of work with teenagers. So I wrote a meditation book, my first book for teenagers.

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I spent three years teaching mindfulness to incarcerated kids in New York City juvenile halls. There was a sense that I could actually learn a lot in giving back and that there was this cycle to life of giving and receiving and giving and receiving.

It's really important to participate on both ends of those. If you're just receiving or just giving you're not really fully sharing and participating in life.

So when I was in my 30s, I worked a lot with teenagers. Now, I'm in my 40s so I'm working more with twenty-somethings. I think maybe in my 50s I'll work with thirty-somethings. I don't know.

I do think this is a way in which people who are somewhat older, but not like way older than you. There's this way in which information can be shared and passed in a really powerful way.

So if they're sometimes too distant, the lifestyles are just so diverse that it's hard to connect. I always find that it's really important for me both to learn from those who've gone ahead of me and then to also share what I can share with those who are in a similar place that I was in. I find that there are so many 20 something now who are asking such like deep profound questions about life and about meaning or purpose.

It's actually energizing to be around them. It's actually like life force of potential and possibility that's also very scattering and overwhelming to them. Usually just like overwhelm, but the energy underneath it is just this real vitality and possibility.

So this energy is going to creating the world that we see years from now. So being able to provide support and a container and a platform for people more consciously exploring what's really true for them or what's important to them. For me it's just very rewarding.

Ben: Nice. Like a two decade mentor buffer. I should go looking for nine year old right now.

Kerena: Right.

Ben: Kerena, you mentioned the struggles that you've seen twenty-somethings that are different than what you were facing. I also imagine that there are a lot of the universal human sufferings that you're encountering as well that our generation has. So I'm wondering if both of you could speak to just some of the both the unique and the constant issues that you've seen twenty-somethings working with.

Kerena: Yeah. Probably one of the main things that I see twenty-somethings bringing to the table is that they really want meaningful work. They're really looking at the lives of their parents and the generations before them and the 50 hour work weeks and the not a lot of time.

They're starting to ask for a different model. They're like I want more freedom. I want more independence. I want to be able to work from home. I want to have a life. I want to be behind the values of who or what I'm working with.

I want to be lined up with the value system of what I'm doing in the world. The generation I grew up in, we were willing to sell out for money, for cars. When I saw my generation emerge at that age, one there was a lot more possible for us, but our willingness to sell out for the shiny glamour seemed to be more common than what I see these guys.

Like the deeper value system of really having their values drive their work is it's beautiful and it's also a little scary for the parents of these kids and the people around them who were like they're like no. Rather than have a miserable job I'll live at home and hang out until I find something that's a little more aligned with what I want to be doing.

So I would say that there are so many twenty-somethings that I run into that really want a life where their work and their values are matched up. I read a site the other day that by the year 2025, 75% of the work force is going to be millennial. That's huge.

The impact that these guys can have on the work environment is huge and their value systems, I'm loving what they're up to in terms of valuing what's important to them and wanting that to be matched up. So that's one of the common things that I see a lot of.

Ben: Right. Soren, would you like to add anything?

Soren: Yeah. I think Kerena is actually more in touch with probably a wider variety of twenty-somethings than I am. Most of my work involves in the tech community. So in the tech community, there's a lot of younger people, entrepreneurs and coders and engineers and stuff who have this enormous **[0:15:27] [Indiscernible]** people that I meet particularly the entrepreneurs of wanting to positively impact the world.

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So they don't necessarily want to create the next Yahoo or Google or Amazon. They want to create the next powerful force that actually they view as having positive impact on the world and successful at the same time. So at least from the people that I see now, there's this desire to actually make a real positive mark on the world which was different.

When I was a young person, the dream was to try and be that billionaire business person who lived somewhat distant and isolated and on the top of the penthouse. I think people now community is much more important to them and connection is much more important to them.

I think one of the big challenges of this age is that we have so many ways to connect digitally which is so different than when I was a kid where if you wanted to hang out with someone you went over to their house and you talk to them.

Kerena: I mean we had to dial the phone. I don't need to age us here, but you have to put your finger all the way around the circle.

Soren: I know that one, yeah. Challenges today is like I've got 500 friends on Facebook, but if I'm really honest myself when I go to bed at night I'm

lonely. I feel isolated. I have my phone right next to me, but I don't know what to do. I lack the certain connection and I don't know how to get it.

As much as I love all the texting and all the IM-ing and all the whatever else, there's still this other deeper longing that's there and how do I follow that and how do I trust that in this age where there's so much information and so much I can read and so much I can do.

How do I navigate that? That's very different than when Kerena and I were kids where the amount of content and the amount of ways to connect were much limited. I don't think it's a bad thing. It's just the different challenge.

Kerena: Yeah, that's another I think issue for us, but also for young people these days is just that feeling of being scattered. When you pick up your phone and you go on Facebook and you get pulled into an advertisement. This thing of how can I consciously put my attention on what I want to be putting my attention on and what is that?

First is letting myself just get kind of dragged around by all the different distractions that are possible there.

Soren: Yeah and then there's the space for solitude and the space for contemplate of which in my life I remember when my dad would come home at 5:00 or 5:30 he was largely with us. He was largely present. It wasn't a lot of things that we'd all maybe watch TV together, but there wasn't a lot he was doing besides hang out with us.

Today even when we're with our friends, they could be doing three or four other things, right? So it's like we're physically in the same room, but attention wise we can be all over the world.

I think there's a big longing for younger people in general to feel like the phone's great, but when is the time we're actually seen? When's the time where I give my full attention and I get to receive somebody's full attention? I love all the gadgets and everything and also missing this way of being seen and seen.

There's a longing to have this experience and this uncertainty about how to get in one's life.

Ben: So would you say that many of the people that you encounter both in the entrepreneurial tech realm and also in workshops and as clients has had



that experience and find themselves missing it or trying to figure out how to have it or it's something that they're just now discovering is even possible.

Soren:

It's a mixture. I mean I think most people have had it at certain time. So sometimes I remember when I was working with teenagers in juvenile hall, we sometimes talk about what makes a best friend, somebody who gives you presence or who gives you stuff. That actually the best friends we have are often the people who when we really need their attention they'll show up and will be fully present.

Like Thich Nhat Hanh said the greatest gift we can give someone is our presence. I think people are beginning to realize as cool as all of our gadgets are if they don't feel somebody's presence and if they're not able to give their full presence there's this way in which things aren't quite as profound and as impactful as they could be.

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I do think that there's this way in which everybody has touched that at certain times. If the teacher or a parent or an aunt or uncle or a friend or somebody that they just felt really seen and heard by. We all enter this like fast-paced constant information age.

I think people are really wondering and I'm a part of it as well. I'm on Facebook and Twitter and everything else, but amidst all that activity how do we find these other moments where we can go a little more deeply and touch a deeper space inside us.

Kerena:

The other thing where my mind goes to is like when we turn off all the gadgets and the phones and everything which happens at Esalen when we're there with twenty-somethings. It's like getting really curious about what is it like to be with each other without all that going on.

If we really just breathe into being with each other and what's up for us and can we be authentic to that both as an individual, but within the group. Can we be honest to ourselves about really where we're at and what matters to us?

It's like it's amazing things happen. I could never plan what occurs or know, but just that intention of creating a container for us to be together and be present together is amazing to see how much that hunger when the hunger of being gets met there's such joy in it.

Ben: Yeah, it's beautiful. It's amazing how it's such a simple thing, but I'm finding even in my own life the fact that there's always a computer screen open or an iPhone going off is something that's really taking more and more consciousness to disconnect and to be present.

So invitation to everyone listening to bring a little more mindfulness to those moments when you could disconnect even more to allow for greater connection, greater presence.

What that kind of leads me to is I would love to hear a bit more about are some of the practices or approaches that you find most helpful for millennials?

Kerena: Well, I'll go. I would just say that I think that a practice that I'm practicing on a regular basis for millennials, but also for all of us just the practice of turning off my phone and turning off my computer. I like what Michael Beckwith says. He says the practice is just SYBD and it's just to sit your butt down and just breathe and connect for like ten minutes.

It sounds so simple, but that muscle of being able to connect with the breath and my body and my mind. It just starts to strengthen and I am more calm and present and aware and I'm less kind of drugged by my mind.

I have clients that have told me they wake up with their phone right next to them and they're checking their Twitter, checking their Facebook and before they know it they're just totally spread out all over the place. They're just like, "What the hell? I wasn't intending on doing this and yet I've just lost two hours."

So that practice is can we just begin to bring ourselves back, you know. That's a big one constantly that's on my agenda for myself, but I also see it really helps other people.

Soren: I don't know what people should do now. I was just trying to think back when I was in my 20s and around that age and what seemed helpful. One of the things I think just seemed helpful was -- I'll just put it in this phrase, but to go for experience.

I think we're drawn to certain activities, but then it's easy for the mind to say, "Well, you don't know how to do that. You've never done that

before. What if you fail? What happens if?" We worry about what the outcome is going to be.

The more that I find that I can just tap into you know, what I'm going to go and I'm going to take this friendship just for the experience and I'm going to experience it fully, what it's like or I'm going to try and start this blog that I've always wanted to do. I'm just going to go for the experience whether it fails or succeeds or whatever people do, but I'm going to go for the experience.

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So for me, a lot of that was around hitchhiking where I would hitchhike a lot in my 20s. They'd be like, "Why do you hitchhike? It's kind of crazy. It's dangerous."

I felt like I just needed that experience. Like I needed to know what it was like to be out on the road with very little in my backpack walking along and seeing what would happen like I was just drawn to the experience. If I tried to rationalize it to my parents, I couldn't rationalize it. I knew that there was something drawing me internally that I just felt like this is an experience I need.

Like Steve Jobs had said you can never connect the dots beforehand. You only connect the dots afterwards. Years later, you might then be able to go and go, "Oh wow, I saw how I needed to do that before I did this which then led me to do that."

At the time all you know is it draws you. Steve Jobs talked about taking calligraphy classes in Oregon. It's like he dropped out of college and then he was like just sneaking into class to take calligraphy classes and then he designed all these cool fonts and all these whole look of the Apple and he never knew any of that when he was there.

There's this way of just following your interest, following life force, following energy without trying to come up with the end result which is knowing like this is calling me so I'm going to trust it and follow it. Letting the mind catch up years later with the reasoning about why you did --

Kerena:

Making sense of it.

Soren: Yeah. Like he needed a bunch of calligraphy classes and then years later you realize, "Wow, that led to this whole other thing that I could have never seen."

Kerena: It's actually, Soren, it's something that I feel like I've learned from you is just that just the willingness to it's like if you're interested in somebody just call them. If you want to know more about what they do, just reach out without a big agenda, but just from a genuine place of being curious about just the willingness to follow that like you do that in so many beautiful ways.

Soren: Yeah and you're going to fall and you're going to get hurt and you're going to fail and you're going to lose money. It's not like everything works out, right.

Kerena: No, you're going to get into a bad hitchhiking situation or whatever.

Soren: Yeah, often midnight in some godforsaken place.

Kerena: There's a lot of stuff that does work out too, right? There's the willingness. I'm remembering the story you told me about when you wanted to get -- somehow you had met Richard Gere and you wanted to get books for the kids, right, who were in juvenile hall. I don't remember the exact of it, but the meeting seemed like it was totally kind of like you just reached out somehow.

You've got in contact with them. Like a whole other thing came together out of it, but it was the reaching out that kind of made the relationship start to take form.

Soren: Yeah. I forgot about that. So on Christmas day in New York City we delivered like 600 books to all the kids, every kid in juvenile hall. I think we gave them Harry Potter actually and Richard covered the cost.

It doesn't mean that things always work out, but there's something about just going for the experience. I remember I was interviewing Biz Stone who is one of the founders of the Twitter in one of our Wisdom 2.0 conference.

He talked about going to work as a book designer at a company in Boston and going for the interview and just wondering like how does this all connect to anything and then later on he's designing the look of the

website which is very kind of similar to how you might design a book cover.

So there's all these ways in which things connect later on, but at the moment all we just know is we're drawn to something. Anyways, if there's anything I can offer is just to trust that instinct and to follow it to whatever degree you can and to say that everything else will get clear.

I like to say follow energy not identity. So you're following energy. You're following what life wants to come through you versus following identity which is like, "Well, how will this look to my friends? Will this increase my status? Will this make me cooler to whatever, whatever?"

It's like it's not about the position. It's just about that instinct that's coming from us that wants expression to the world. Inevitably, we'll have links to other activities in our life that there's no way to see initially.

**[0:30:14]**

Ben: Yeah, I love that. I don't know if this is true, but the experience I've had in communities with much larger willingness to kind of live in that mystery and follow the energy and push out, as you said before, Kerena, like living with your parents pushing out having a "real" career to really follow the sense of what will truly move you.

I'm curious what you two would say because there's also thirty-somethings and twenty-somethings on the series. So I know that there have been worries for people as they start getting a bit older and a bit older about really finding what it is they're saying and really sinking their teeth into it and having it be their life purpose.

I'm wondering what advice or insights you may offer to someone like that who's not necessarily in their earlier mid-20s, but moving along and ready to really bite themselves into something.

Kerena: The thing that shows up for me is just that even if you find something like I love the work I do. I fell in love with it when I was 18 and it continues to evolve in many different ways. So it's not like you get somewhere and that's your life path, but the following just feels like for me it just keeps happening and keeps emerging.

So when you find something that you can really dive your energy in and time into. I feel a lot of people struggle with this kind of like, "Oh, I have to find my life path or is this my life path? Am I in it or not in it?"

It's like Soren was saying, just following the passion and trying to ground it and knowing that does -- it shifts forms along the way. So not getting attached to this is my life path, it may look like one way one year and it may totally shift gears the next year.

The other thing that shows up is the importance of staying with it what the "it" is. That thing that I want to develop or that thing that I love, that thing that I'm interested in. It's like can I keep my attention with it and allow that to grow?

I think we get into trouble sometimes around even myself like this is my life path. Okay, then I'm stuck in my life path where it's just like it's going to change throughout.

Soren:

I remember Eckhart Tolle telling the story where he said he was in England, if I remember the details right, and he's moving to the States. He just had this guidance to write this book and so he was moving to the States and the book he ended up writing was the Power of Now and sold, I don't know how many millions of copies.

At the time, he was kind of with no money and living in very meager situations. He called his parents and was telling them about his desire to go to the States. They looked at me just like, "When are you ever going to amount to anything? There's no sense to the States. You're just kind of continue being a loser," kind of thing.

Energetically, something drew him there and then they write one of the best spiritual authors of our generation. He was like 50 at the time and for the first years from zero to 40 or whatever everyone thinks he's a loser. He said it's really funny to read articles later on and they said, "Eckhart Tolle who came out of nowhere."

He was like, "I didn't come out of nowhere. I was just myself the whole time." Then all of the sudden everyone says I'm great, right. The world says I was not so great before, but just like if we're really attuned to like a connection, then it matters last what the world wants us to be.

I think one of the things I've really learned from him is he talks about primary purpose and secondary purpose. So if your primary purpose is always to be fully present in this moment right now. This is the only moment you're ever living is now.

The future is just a dream, fantasy. The past is just an imagination. Right now right here, this is the only moment we have access to. To what extent are you friendly to that moment? Are you welcome in that moment? Are you engaged in that moment?

So it's like that's your primary purpose is to be here in this moment. Your secondary purpose is what wants to move through you? So what action in the world wants to come forth through you?

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Since that your secondary purpose, he says, "But if you ever get your secondary purpose and your primary purpose confused, switched around and your project is more important than the moment, you lose the flow because all of the sudden you think you're here not to experience life fully, but to create some project into the world."

I've always really liked that balance of actually being present and listening and at the same time following whatever it is that we want to follow, but being alive and awake in all the different moment that we live is actually much more important than some end result. We get to our deathbed and realize, "I completed my projects," but you're totally not present **[0:35:52] [Indiscernible]** moments in between.

So I feel like almost the best practice that I've learned is to like what's my experience right now. Am I fully with whatever anxiety or fear, whatever is happening? One of the interesting about my life is for years I would do stuff and no one ever see it or acknowledge it really and then all of a sudden more people know about me now and are trying to reach me and trying to do stuff.

Neither really is that pleasant to be honest with you. You think becoming more popular is more pleasant, but it's just a different challenge just like more email to deal with.

So whatever we dream of is going to have its pros and cons. You can dream about being Eckhart Tolle and selling all these books or whatever and then it's hard for you to walk to the store without people coming and approaching you.

So everything has its pros and cons and to what extent can we actually embrace whatever our conditions are and then open up to how life wants to be used through us and listen to that. Oprah in this interview once she

said she got down on her hands and knees and she just looked up at the heavens and said, "Use me."

Kerena: Right. I remember that.

Soren: Yeah. I think there's an energy to that, right? Like, "Listen, use me. Use me. I'm here."

Kerena: The other thing I was thinking about, Soren, when you were speaking was that how being in community that values the being present to. Like an example is sometimes Soren will come over and we'll have we call them these small board meetings where we'll talk about our work or what we're doing and just like how it feels for us and just listen to each other around it in an honest way.

Maybe like, "God, I'm just not feeling it. I'm feeling down or on it. I'm just like I'm not inspired." Whatever it maybe, but having people that can hold that space for us and kind of love us through it and just go, "Yup. Right now it just kind of it sucks right now."

Something else is wanting to come out of the trusting that something is coming out of even just the feeling depressed in your work or feeling down or feeling like you don't know what's next or being able to be seen and held in that in a small community that values that dropping and authenticity and just allowing.

That feels like big guess. The more we can create spaces for people to have that for themselves to really be heard and be seen without having to like we have to come up with an answer or fix it or even give real specific advice.

It's more like a brainstorming of what's true for me. So when I was listening to you talk I was thinking about just the value of having a container for that process that you were talking about.

Soren: The phrase "whatever we resist persist," a container that can allow us to be with whatever it is that we have a tendency to resist.

Kerena: Yeah. Sometimes telling the truth is like uncomfortable, right. It's like, "Yeah, I'm feeling uninspired or I'm feeling like nothing is working and can I be with that," and really just trust the underbelly of it that there's something else that's wanting to get my attention here versus run from myself and not tell the truth about maybe this isn't the right path for me.



It's like maybe this isn't working the way I want it to be. So the board meeting concept is kind of fun.

Soren: Yeah. If you can find the friend to be friends I think that's super helpful where you can just be yourself with. It's not about you becoming somebody different, but it's actually about your more fully experiencing whatever you're experiencing.

Like when the entrepreneur world that I'm in touch with, often their dream is to be the founder of Facebook or Twitter or whatever the next big thing is and that's the fantasy that's drawing the works. It's understandable, right? Everyone wants to win the game.

**[0:40:27]**

Then you meet with the founders of Facebook and Twitter and I mean they're great people, but they've got their own struggles and family is asking them to borrow money and people wanting their attention. All these stuff becomes --

Kerena: Too many emails.

Soren: It's just a different, you know, and going to parties and not really being able to enjoy yourself at parties because everyone wants to shake your hand, whatever. I can't say what all their challenges are, but I've hung around enough people in different success to know that there are challenges.

So to what extent are we embracing and open to whatever challenges we're experiencing. I've never been into like the whole manifestation thing. Like I'm going to manifest this job or this whatever, but I do think energetically the more that we get clear and the more that we work on whatever emotional things are left that are still binding us, the more that we just work internally on what's holding us back.

The external world just shows up in a whole different way, but if we keep looking for the external world to do it without us actually doing the work. I think we're just continually disappointed or I'm continually disappointed.

Ben: I'm wondering if either of you could speak to any ways or practices or exercises you use to work with your emotional world. I know you,

Kerena, do some Gestalt therapy and these many other modalities. I'm wondering what you two might recommend.

Kerena: The thing that I'm thinking right now is, Soren, when you're talking about how whatever that internal thing is. For a lot of us, we all have this, but it's like that part of us that comes in that really is self-critical, right?

So the practice that I use is seeing it as a part versus seeing it as me. It's like a part of me that is beating myself up, but part of the problem I see people get into and that I can get into myself is when I believe the story that are running.

The story maybe, "Oh, you grew up in Lubbock, Texas. Why do you think you're going to have a life in California?" Whatever the story is and that when we really get plastered to those stories, they really bring us down.

So just emotionally and psychologically I try. There's a lot of work happening now more around parts. So there's a lot of different ways to do it, but I think just first acknowledging that there may be a part of me that is criticizing me and just being able to kind of get side of it versus thinking that it's actually who I am.

Once you realize that it's like a voice or a part, you can begin to work with it. You can begin to see it and the belief in what I notice is true is even that part that is criticizing us and beating us up actually has a good intention if we unpack it.

Sometimes it's trying to get us to do the things that we really want to do, but are afraid. One place I see us all kind of getting stuck is thinking we are our minds and being able to have a little witnessing on like, "Oh, I just thought that and that could be a part that's criticizing me versus actually the truth about me."

I could unpack that a lot further, but I think just for the sake this is sort of a little place that pops up in my mind that I see sort of consistent throughout a lot of us.

Soren: I think whenever we do that, let's say we don't have a job and all of our friends are like working for the hot new start-ups and we're like, "Well, I'm just like lower level me."

Kerena: I'm a loser.

Soren: Yeah, I'm a loser me. Then happiness is becoming one of the cool me. Whatever that energy is motivating, it always seems to just for me anyways it always seems to just lack any real joy. When I can break that division in my mind and really see more fundamentally on a human level what we're all, seven billion of us are doing on this planet and all of our longing for happiness and meaning.

That connect to a different level that's not about this little me that I'm identifying with and the story around a life is so horrible for this little me. Now, it's so wonderful for everybody else.

That frees up this whole new energy to then move. I'd like to think of it as like are we acting from incompleteness or from wholeness? If we're acting from incompleteness are we looking for the world to complete us? The world isn't very helpful.

**[0:45:38]**

Kerena: Well, it'll show us other challenges, you know.

Soren: It's just sort of like play like versus acting of expression or fullness excitement or joy of just creation. Like, I don't know, the universe loves to create. It creates trees. It creates clouds. We're just creating along with it and just tuning into that such that this little me in the story is like a space to be seen by something much bigger and this will look beginning to live from that place that's much bigger and then from this place of much bigger what wants to come forth.

Kerena: You know what, one thing I was thinking of, Soren, was that place of when the little me recognizes that everybody in the circle also does the little me number that we're all like beating ourselves up on some level. It all just kind of comes the human predicament.

Like, "Oh, we all do this stuff to ourselves." There's this sort of movement of humor and like, "Let's just get on with it. Let's just sort of move forward here." One of the things that came up working with the Esalen group was just this theme of self-criticism and how hard we are on our self.

Soren: Self-hatred.

Kerena: Self-hatred, yeah. It was actually bigger than self-criticism. For a twenty-something, you're entering the work world. There's not a lot of jobs.

You're living with your parents. The world starts narrowing in and it's really easy to go into the "I'm a loser-little-me-place," right?

Yet if we can really sort of start to open to that, if there's a whole bunch of other people who were also in this situation and also suffering and struggling and can we be with that and also stay open to the creative part of this is kind of a crazy predicament we're in.

How do we use the time that we do have at our parent's house jobless to create some anchors and some growth and know that there are a lot of other people who are also in the same place that we're not really alone in it as much as we may feel we're alone in it.

Soren: It reminds me, Kerena, when I was in 20s I can't remember what age, but I spent six months living with that in Texas.

Kerena: Oh, God. That's like the hardest.

Soren: I wrote a book like before computers were really around and it was called *A Fall from Grace: An Investigation of the Closed Heart*.

Kerena: Wow. I've never heard about that book.

Soren: Yeah. I don't know what happened to it. It's somewhere. It's wrapped in this red nylon thing and I remember I used to go back at Christmas year and look at it and see it.

I had no idea why I was writing it, but it was like no one had ever read. It's just like about that time that was super valuable to like just get **[0:48:44] [Indiscernible]** out of whatever was going on.

I think when we're hot in that self-hatred and that self-criticism it's really hard to trust that like okay, there's maybe something to this time that I'm spending at home or time that I'm spending unemployed or whatever that is.

Kerena: Yeah. I remember when I was just finishing college and my dad would always say, "Well, you can always come home." It used to terrify me like to Lubbock, Texas like I'm in California. Just the overwhelm of like I didn't at that point in my life I was like I still don't want to go home.

Yet here you went home and you burn the book. I mean you never know. I saw a stat the other day and I don't know how true this is. It was a

LinkedIn article that 85% of millennials will return home with their parents at some point. That seems like a really high percentage.

Ben: Yeah. That's beautiful. I really appreciate the new context to hold it in. What is being birthed in me or what am I learning here. What are the opportunities and just speaking to the self-integration we can do.

It feels like a perfect time actually, it's near end of our call, to open up to our audience. So I'd love to invite people who are on the phone line to if you have a question hit 1. If you're on the webcast go ahead and type any questions you have in there and I'll be happy to share those.

**[0:50:26]**

I wish I could continue the conversation. I actually see some have already come in earlier. So I'm happy to go with those. One question here is for both of you saying, "Is there anything that you've seen in your workshops that has been surprising for you that you weren't expecting?"

Soren: I think the self-hatred piece is one.

Kerena: I was going to say the same thing.

Soren: Remember someone brought it up and then someone was like it's I'm really shy to say this and then several other people are like, "No, actually that's what I wanted to say too and I was too shy to say it as well."

Kerena: Yeah. It just surprised me that so many people were dealing with self-hatred is a big word and that really named it for a lot of the folks in the space. I remember that after that you led a loving kindness meditation.

Soren: Yeah. Remember one woman too was like her parents really wanted her to achieve and become a lawyer, something professional. I think she was a hairdresser or something and she's just like, "I really love it. That's my experience is I really love doing this other job.

There's this part of my mind that still judges me for not living this other life that my parents expected of me." The sad part is like the tendency is that the more successful the parent is, they're called successful in terms of the world's eyes. The more pressure the kid feels to live up to them, right.

If they make 100 grand a year you need to make more. If they did this, you know, and I think then it creates a very shallow relationship with our parents. People are really looking to start a more authentic relationship with their parents which isn't achievement based. It is much more about authenticity.

Kerena: Yeah. You know, Ben, the other thing that came up in my mind is that I have seen that surprised me is the amount of social anxiety in groups that people just is present for them and how much they like want to connect in an authentic way, but it's just like how do we do that. The anxiety that comes up is really palpable for a lot of people and that that's totally normal.

Soren: Yeah. People communicate digitally and more sometimes being in person is a little strange.

Ben: Very true. Yeah, and that's actually an interesting transition to the next question just came in which is it's really easy to talk about the downsides of technology, but I'm wondering if you could speak to some of the benefits. How do you think that we can best utilize technology to support life?

Soren: Yeah. I organize this conference called Wisdom 2.0 and people ask me like, "Well, how do you find all the speakers for that?" I mainly use Twitter because the goal in Twitter is like you follow anybody you actually get to find out what their interest are and you get to connect with them in a whole different way than what they include on their LinkedIn page or on their website.

One of the things that's very different from our world now that my sister and I had was when I grew up there was like four or five main stations, right. ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN and stuff, but the media controlled all the messages that we got.

It was all controlled by these very large media companies that didn't necessarily have our best interest in mind. Now, technology has helped us expand that such that we all now can communicate directly with one another and share things that are less diluted and much more direct.

I think that's a huge possibility and then also just part of the isolation I felt as a kid was like where is my clan? Where is my community? Technology now allows you to not only access different teachings, virtual teachings through books and blogs and other things, but it allows you to

connect with those people whether it's a Facebook group or otherwise that actually feel like, "You know what, these are my people that I want to be in touch with."

So I think there's a huge storage that technology opens up. People are using Skype now to connect the barriers of space that don't matter as much. So I think it's a hugely powerful tool and at the same time its power is only really to the quality of presence that we're bringing to it.

**[0:55:08]**

We can use it addictively or we can use it consciously. It's just like a telephone, right. You can use it to have these very loving conversations or you can spread hatred. The telephone itself is cool, but if we think the telephone is that then we're missing the point.

I feel like there's this way in which technology has often opens up these doors and it really invites us then to say, "All right. What are we bringing to this and how do we bring our best to this such that it's used in the most the very possible."

Kerena: I like that. I like the way you put that, Soren.

Ben: Right on. For the next question, here we go. So we've talked a lot about in the moment practices as being present in allowing life to fulfill through us. I'm wondering if you could speak to some of the more structured practices you have in your life such as how you get up in the morning or how you move through your day.

Kerena: One thing that I'm pretty committed to as far as something feels like a structured practice to me because I do it four or five days a week is I run in the woods close to my house. Inevitably it's like one of my highest, clearest, most appreciative moments are when I'm just running and I'm in nature and I'm unplugged and I'm just moving my body.

For me, that time is so beautiful that if I don't get it I can feel it. I feel the difference. It seems like it is something that is a practice.

Soren: Yeah. It's interesting. I don't know if I actually have any. I used to have a lot. I don't have intention. So generally my intention is typically the hour bed is to not have technology and allow my mind and body to just settle into a different pace because when I'm engaged with technology, the pace my mind is working tends to be pretty fast.

If I try and go to bed without break in between it doesn't work so well. I don't know. As I live life, I had a bunch in my 20s and 30s. It was very structured and I find that right now I just listen to my body if that's one practice.

So it's like what do I need time? Often that's to walk more or to be outside more, but I don't like to take on prescriptions. So for example there are people I know who are putting ten, 12 hours a week or ten, 12 hours a day in their computer and they're doing amazing things, right.

There's so much passion and so much energy around it and they're saving rainforests and helping children. It's infused with just this incredible energy. So to tell them and there's other people who never touched technology who are totally depressed and on all kinds of medications and whatever, right.

They don't have a cellphone. So we can't say like, "Okay, well you're not supposed to do this or not supposed to do that." I do feel like more what interest me is the tuning in process. What do I really need and how do I tune in to that and trust that?

I feel like that's actually the best thing we can ever give ourselves and maybe what we need is structure and creating a structure that every day we do X, Y and Z.

I think it's different doing that structure believing like this is what I need right now versus I'm doing this because I'm better than all those other people who don't do it. I think that actually is a trap.

Kerena:

I think too, Soren, what you bring up is like where is that place that I feel connected and alive and can I tap into that more often? It maybe that it's a practice for a while, but it's like where do I feel most connected and can I continue to visit that while it connects me whether that's in nature or walking at the beach or being with a friend that's also a seeker where you get to go really deep with each other.

You can look such a variety of ways and I think part of what you speak to is where got like the stuck place would be like I have to sit every half an hour every day. It's like there is a regiment which didn't really serve so well.

[1:00:00]



Soren: Yeah. Same time I did that for years. I did two meditation practices a day every morning, every night. It may serve, but again it's the difference between like I have to do this. This is what spirituality looks like. This is what evolve person does.

This is just where I'm drawn. To me, there's that whole different energy that can go into one. If we think we're super cool because we do something and then we meet people who are like, "Well, I meditated for 45 minutes today. You did 30?"

It's this idea of ourselves and like well, I've made it for ten years and I'm so much more selfless than you who've meditated for five, right?

Kerena: Before we had our daughter, my partner and I were every morning for you know had taken an hour and a half to meditate, chant. We did all these practices. Now, we have a kid and it's like we've got to have our spiritual be around parenting right now. So it shows up a lot different than what it was three years ago.

Soren: Didn't your three old recently told you she'll be your teacher?

Kerena: She did, yeah. She said, "Mama, do you have a teacher?" I said, "Not right now, but I'd like one." She said, "I'll be your teacher." I said, "Well," I laughed. I was like, "You're kind of already are." I said, "What are you going to teach me about?" She goes, "About you, mama. I'm going to teach you about you." I was like, "Okay, teacher." Bow.

Ben: That was awesome. Well, we actually reached the top of the hour. It's been such a pleasure to meet you and get to know you. I really appreciate everything you've offered. I wonder if you have any just final thoughts, final message.

If you also include in there how people could stay connected to your work, that'll be great.

Kerena: Great. Well, I just want to appreciate you, Ben, for just making this happen and creating a space for people like us to be able to come in and speak to Gen Y issues because I think there is a translation piece that needs to happen from the psychological and spiritual world into sort of like who is this group now and how can we support them.

So I just really appreciate your making room for us and space for us to come in. We have a website for the workshop March 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> which is [authenticpath20s.com](http://authenticpath20s.com). We have some scholarships available. So if people email me you could just go on the website and let me know if you're interested. We could sort of make some of that happen. So I wanted to let folks know about that.

Ben: Awesome.

Soren: Yeah, and I think we have contact information there too, don't we, Kerena?

Kerena: Yeah. Yup.

Soren: Yeah, also you can find me if you Google Wisdom 2.0 or go to [wisdom2.0conference.com](http://wisdom2.0conference.com). The other work I do within the tech like spiritual stuff is there.

Kerena: Wisdom has some scholarships open too.

Soren: Yeah. We have scholarships and we also have student rates that are really reasonable. So if you're a student and you want to come you can come in much cheaper rate than all the other people pay. Then we also have scholarship form to fill out if you're interested in scholarship.

Ben: Sounds great. Well, such a pleasure having you on. It's true blessing to my life and work that includes conversations like this. So thank you for who you both are being in the world and what you're creating and I look forward to more.

Kerena: Yeah, me too. Thanks, Ben.

Ben: Thank you. Have a beautiful rest of your evening and everybody on the line. We'll be back next week with Ryland Engelhart from Café Gratitude and the documentary May I Be Frank. He's an amazing young man in his early 30s. He's just doing great stuff in the world. So look forward to seeing you again.

All right everybody. Have a beautiful rest of your week. Bye-bye.

Kerena: Bye.

**[1:04:19] End of Audio**

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