



Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider

Episode 196

thesimpleshow.com

Segment One

Tsh: This is simple; I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

Hey friends, in this episode I'm chatting with my friend and contributing writer Crystal Ellefsen, where as always, we're talking about what we wrote about this week. Crystal wrote about the role of people like therapists, coaches of all sorts, counselors and other helping professionals and the huge importance of not only paying them but also for us to invest in having them in our lives, to see them as not extra or only in case of emergencies, but as a vital ongoing role in our lives toward our own betterment. We've both benefited from these people in our lives. We get into why we think it's so important to welcome help from smart, trained, thoughtful humans when you need it. And then this week I wrote about six things I'd tell my graduating self, looking back at what it was like at 18 years old and headed off to college in just a few months, this all came from my going to our school's graduation where several of my students graduated.

In this episode I get deeper into one of those six points, which was that it's okay to change your mind. Here in this chat I get into what exactly I have changed my mind about in the 20 plus years that have passed. Now, this isn't prescriptive, where I'm telling you to change your mind about these things too. I'm simply telling you what's been true for me. Even if you've landed somewhere else than I have on some of these issues, I'll bet you anything you can resonate with me about what it's like to surprise yourself with what you never thought you'd think differently about. Never say never, right? And then a really quick reminder, if you haven't yet signed up to get my weekly newsletter called Five Quick Things where I send you a short happy email sharing five things either created or love from the week.

It's a great way, actually one of the best ways really to keep up with new podcast episodes, blog posts, events to where we can meet up and other fun stuff. It can be read in under a minute because I hate inbox clutter too. To get it, head to [FiveQuickThings.email](mailto:FiveQuickThings@email) or just click on the link in this episode's show notes. All right, so let's get right into it. Crystal and I are starting off by talking about ways I've changed since I graduated high school and how we all have really, and why it's good to embrace it instead of being scared of it.

[00:02:19](#) This week we're gonna switch things up a little where I am going to talk first about the post I wrote and then Crystal, we'll get into yours. This week I wrote, I titled it "Six Things I'd Tell My Graduating Self," and where this came from was this past weekend I went to a graduation and it wasn't just any graduation, it was a graduation for the seniors in my class. I actually knew these seniors and it's been a while since I've been in that place. I think maybe since I was a college student or just a little bit after where I went to a high school graduation and I knew the kids directly and personally and so it was really meaningful to me and it immediately put me back into that head space where the future is really bright but also a little unknown and it feels a little scary but also fun and I don't know Crystal, how you feel, but it feels to me like I was just there, maybe a few years ago. Definitely not 20 plus years ago.

Crystal: Absolutely. When I see people these days I'm like, oh wait, they're in college. But they seem so much younger than me, but I feel like I was just in college.

Tsh: I know. It is so weird. I mean I think that's a lifelong thing. I remember my parents even saying that and at the time I was thinking, but you guys are grownups and mature. What do you mean? I've come to embrace that that's just part of life where you always feel young and like you're making it up in a way.

Crystal: You feel like it wasn't that long ago, but at the same time you have so much more understanding about yourself and the world and your values that also make you feel very far from. I think it's both, you feel like, wow, I'm such a different person, but also I don't feel old.

Tsh: [00:03:57](#) Yes. Maybe that's the best way to put it because I realized how much I have changed. And honestly, what's been funny is this past year, whenever the kids, it's a very dialogue heavy class that I taught. We had a lot of discussions because it was about literature. It gets into real life stuff. It was interesting to me sometimes when the kids would get really dogmatic about certain things, like this is the way life is. And in my mind, I'm just thinking, I remember feeling that way too about things being more black and white and things being, just clearer. The last point I made...

Crystal: You think you know more than you do.

Tsh: You really do. The last point I made in my post, which is where I thought I would dive deeper in our chat, is this idea of it being okay to change your mind. The big broad brush stroke I'm going to say is the older I get, the more I realize how little I know. I think that's a sign of maybe maturity and wisdom to embrace how little you do know. It's not that I graduated thinking I knew at all or that I was a know it all. I think I just thought I knew much more than I did. I don't know if that makes sense.

Crystal: Absolutely.

Tsh: I got to thinking, okay. I just generally said at my post, it's okay to change your mind. I changed my mind, but I didn't really get into what I've changed my mind about. It really got me to thinking even deeper what has changed and oh my goodness, there's no way I could even, I mean I could write a book about what all I've changed my mind about, there's a few that really stand out to me that I thought I would just unpack a little bit.

The thing I want to preface though, both with you Crystal and with listeners, is that I am simply telling my experience, I am not being prescriptive here. I'm not telling anybody you should think this way to or that you should have changed your mind about these things. This is just me being me. But Crystal, I would be curious to hear from you as they get into some of these because you and I had, I would say similar upbringings. I mean we literally went to the same church growing up and we were literally in the same youth group. I don't know, I'd be curious what your experience is here.

Crystal: Well, I'm also very curious to hear yours. I think actually there's a lot of ways in which I'm definitely still processing and trying to identify what are the things that have shifted and so this is really inspiring to me to see that you've pretty clearly, I mean at least I'm looking at your outline pretty clearly articulated to me a lot of the specifics that have changed and I think I haven't gone as far in that process where I know, I'm know some of it, some things that have changed concretely, but I think there's other things that I haven't fully identified and labeled, this thing is this a different way specifically now.

Tsh: I'll bet you you're like a lot of the listeners and so by hearing some of these things, maybe for some listeners this will put some words to how they're feeling or maybe not.

Crystal: I'm so excited to hear all of this.

Tsh: Honestly, the first and most foundational way that I've shifted is in my faith. I think it's so foundational because this is the crux of my worldview and the crux of most of our worldviews, really if you think about it, even if you claim to not really be faith based or have come from a faith based upbringing, I think just this really informs how we view the world. What's the purpose of life? How are we made, what are we made for.

For me, I think it's important to recognize it's not that I have shifted completely in kind, meaning like I once was a Christian and now I am not, or I once was a Christian and now I am some other faith system like Muslim or Hindu. It's not that, it's more a shift in degree or a shift in a spectrum maybe within my

Christian faith. Honestly, I think the easy way to say it is that most everything is way more gray than black and white. I think it has to do with both my age. Meaning when you're 18, things do just see more black and white and more dogmatic and clear cut. I think it also maybe it has to do with a little bit of specifically where I was raised, meaning the South, meaning Texas and also the type of church we went to, I'm not here to point fingers or to really place a lot of blame on background or not.

But we did go to, I guess you could just call it an evangelical church. The way I usually describe it now as a big Texas church. For me what's shifted is what is the meaning of church? What is church, what is the purpose of church? Then really specifically what is the point of our weekly gatherings? What do we get together every week for? For me, I am now Anglican, meaning high church liturgical, and honestly even exploring what it means to dive even deeper into that. I know I'm being really vague and gray and I don't mean to but that's simply because I don't know where I'm at, let's just say I'm doing a lot of research and a lot of prayer, but for me I definitely now understand and feel like the point of our weekly gatherings is the Eucharist and not the sermon and not specifically a pastor focused sermon where it really has to do with, I don't want to say the whims because that sounds negative, but just more what the pastor feels like teaching about.

To me, I love being in the tradition I'm in now where we do follow a larger body, global body of believers, a big church by being Anglican, by being part of the Church of England. That the culmination of why we gather is to partake in the Eucharist, which is a whole other deep thing that is just a theological head scratcher that I won't get into. That's a huge shift in my thought about what church is. Then another thing that is a head scratcher that I'm not going to get into mostly because I don't feel like I know enough, but I have shifted from a perspective of Sola Scriptura into a perspective of the scriptures are sacred but there's also the role of tradition and reason which God uses to inform people on earth and that those are valid and holy and sacred and good.

I don't know if that makes any sense to anybody. Of course, I am not here to convince you to change your mind. I'm just saying that's where I've been.

Crystal: The thing I was just thinking about is how all of that worldview also influences all these other areas of politics and career and gender roles and priorities.

Tsh: That's maybe what I mean by being foundational because you can't separate these from anything else. If you imagine faith being like the foundation then all these other things being parts of the house. Other examples of how I've shifted is politics for sure. I was a classic child of the 80s and teen of the 90s and in the American evangelical subculture, and I think maybe, I'm not trying to be glib or

stereotypical, but if I just say that, I think people know what I mean, perhaps. Especially if you grew up in that.

Crystal: I think now that I live in California, I can even say evangelical subculture in Texas is even different than what people think of that in California. When you say big Texas church, I think that is very accurate.

Tsh: It is quite accurate. Having lived in Oregon and being married to an Oregonian, it is very different. For me politics has shifted. It's funny that we brought up faith again, but I think it's shifted because of my shift in faith. It started when I started thinking of voting as more of a chess move and not a Valentine.

Crystal: I love that.

Tsh: That came from a quote that you, isn't that great? I heard that a few years ago and that was a mind blowing game changer for me because then it freed me up to think of, I am not casting a vote as though all my definition of morality goes to this person and I am asking to be in what you would send a Valentine for to say I love you to this person. That's not it. I am zooming out and thinking what is my most strategic use of my vote? If you think of it as a chess move, it's a game plan and it's longterm. By moving a piece this way, what other 10, 20 moves can then be made for the sake of quote the game. I don't know what the game is in this analogy, but you know what I mean. That helped me enormously to where I was released with this burden of this weird idea that I didn't even realize I had, but that God has a particular favorite or purpose in voting. I don't even know where that came from because my parents were definitely conservative and still are, but they never really espouse this idea of if you are a Christian, you are a Republican. But I think somehow that came into me through osmosis from the world we grew up in, both the time period and the location. Now I'm not at a place where I definitely believe these things and I'm definitely aligned to this party, but I am way more open to thinking about the greater good. To get specific, and I really don't want to get into this too much, especially right now or this is a very volatile topic. But as an example, I used to think abortion was the hinge point decision making thing in casting my vote, it's still super, super important to me and I have lots of thoughts about it, but I've broadened my definition of what it means to be pro-life and that it involves all areas of life and abortion is one. When you think of voting being a chess move instead of a Valentine, what does it look like to reduce the need for abortions? Not so much, I am making a statement of my morality by voting for a particular person who at least says something that I might agree with, but maybe they're voting in the Senate or how they live out their day to day doesn't really align with that. Does that make sense?

Crystal: Oh, absolutely.

Tsh: To kind of wrap up the whole example of politics, my favorite recent quote about how to view politics came from my friend Nish Weiseth. She said this in a talk she gave not too long ago. She says,

“Politics is the single largest systemic tool we have at our disposal with which we can love our neighbor. Politics for the Christian should be institutional neighborliness.”

That's not to say I think that that politics is the most important tool for me to love my neighbor. I could make an argument that she's right, that it's the largest systemic tool we have. For me, when I cast my vote now, it really has to do with how can I best love my neighbor and my neighbor includes both my literal next door neighbor and across the world.

Crystal: Because the policies affect your neighbor and you can influence those policies.

Tsh: That's right. And especially this comes from someone who is largely privileged in our culture. I'm white and I come from a middle class background and by and large things go well for me and my family. I need to think about the greater good and care about the least of these if I'm a Christian. That's where I'm at with that. That has shifted because I really did have much more dogmatic beliefs, which is funny because I didn't even really know what my beliefs were. I was towing the line of these people I think are smart and so I'm going to sink like them.

Another way I've changed my mind since I was a teenager is in my career. I think it's simply, I didn't know what I didn't know is maybe the easy way to say that. I'm just starting off college so I don't know what my career is going to be like. But I also didn't know the role of career in my life. When I was a kid, a little kid, I wanted to be a writer, but then I changed my idea to being an English teacher abroad whenever I thought more sensibly, reasonably. Then eventually I thought it would be some form of humanitarian aid worker slash missionary, and I was for a while. Then when I got married, my thought was, well ultimately I'm going to really be a stay at home mom. The thing is I always knew I was a writer, but I didn't know I had this knack for entrepreneurship because I didn't really study it in college. I didn't really try anything that would exercise those muscles. I guess I just wrote myself off as not necessarily career oriented until I found something that fit me like a glove. I know that's not the case for everybody. I'm just sharing my personal experiences. I almost fell into this idea of career and it turned out it's way more important than I ever thought it would be, in a good way. I really enjoy working and I really enjoy pursuing my career. Crystal, I have a feeling you probably feel really similarly, at least in the role of career and your life.

Crystal: [00:16:57](#) It's interesting to me because as a kid I also always knew, I wanted to be a writer and I also always knew I wanted to have kids, but I didn't really think about how that would all fit together. I feel like as a kid I was pretty career oriented. I entered an entrepreneurship contest when I was 12.

Tsh: Really?

Crystal: Yeah. I had to submit a business plan and so in some ways I think I had both in my mind, I didn't really think through what it would look like. I think on the one hand I thought that I would at least have the option to be a stay at home mom if I wanted to. I didn't really think about the economic, what a privilege that was, especially a long time ago in the nineties and in Texas, it's easier to have one working parent. I didn't think through it, but I definitely, how much I enjoy working was not something I anticipated.

Tsh: Right. It's funny and there's no way, I don't think anybody could have explained that to me as an 18 year old. It's almost one of those, I just wouldn't know until I tried it. That's not to say I always loved working. I definitely had some less than stellar jobs all through college and high school.

Crystal: But that's the point you also made in your post, right? I've also worked coffee shops and waitressing and I think especially customer service jobs are so valuable even just for character building and patience and so many really important skills. Those give you some habits that help you later in your career. But those to me are very different than what I enjoy about my work now. I was proud of myself for being someone who was supporting myself financially in college. But at the same time I definitely was like, I don't want to be doing this in 10 years.

Tsh: No, for sure. It's funny, I can look back now, because I mentioned in the post that I think I felt a little, I don't want to say sorry for myself, but I felt a little bit of a martyr because I had to work my way through college and a lot of my roommates did not. I can look back and see some of those, my fellow waiters and waitresses, when I worked at those restaurants, they were such hard workers and I learned from that, from those people, how hard they worked versus these kids, I don't want to say that everything was handed to them, but for some of them it was, and I'm just guessing maybe jumping into post college life was a little bit of a shock? I'm grateful for the work I did and yes, I'm like you, I am grateful that I wasn't forever doing working at a restaurant or whatever.

Crystal: I think another thing that I experienced working in college that was really beneficial is it really made me think about my life after college in a different way because I was truly thinking, okay, so when I graduate I don't want to be doing this, but I have to make money. I was much more thinking realistically and what

is my plan? Not that I had it all figured out and it wasn't like it was stressful. It was just more, I think I was already sort of in reality of, I want to work hard in my classes. I want to give myself lots of opportunities because I don't want to still be doing this when I graduate. I enjoyed it while I was doing it. It made me have a different perspective on how can I set myself up for success and I didn't blow off my classes because I was like, this is real. I have to support myself financially when I'm done and I want that to be as fun as possible so I'm going to work hard now.

Tsh: Yes. Oh, such good points. That's very, very true for me.

I talked about my faith, my politics, and my career. Now that I'm saying that I see how they all stack on top of each other. The next part of that for me has been gender roles and that plays right into career, like I just mentioned, of course, that plays into my faith. I guess for me it's that I simply never questioned the perspective and my sub culture growing up, this idea that the husband worked slash provided and the wife was a homemaker slash mom, which sounds so *Leave it to Beaver*, 1950s. But if you did grow up in this world in, especially in Texas, you probably know what I'm getting at. I think I got this more from, I don't even know if it was directly our church, but from my church slash Christian subculture than my personal parents directly. My mom always worked, but I think I thought of the whole husband works and provided, wife stays home as the ideal, and a wife works when it's necessary, but it's not ideal. Now I simply don't see that as prescriptive and I don't see that as helpful or dogmatic anymore. That has partly to do with how I now interpret scripture and see what maybe the lens through which I see scripture and the hermeneutic through which I interpret scripture. It's also just for practical reasons for us as a family. When Kyle and I married, it's not like we wrote out this life plan of, okay, you're going to do this and I'm going to do that. But it just naturally evolved to this place where we're at now where I tend to be between the two of us, the one that's better at making money and it's not because Kyle's not a hard worker, he's one of the hardest workers I know. It's just the realms in which you work make less money than where I work. For us it just makes sense for our bigger picture family needs for me to work more and for Kyle to do things like cook because he's actually really great at cooking and I'm fine at cooking. I don't love it and he loves it.

Or there's lots of different examples. That's just a very easy example when it comes to just raising the kids, making the money, what type of work we do, when and how and where. Honestly, it's no big deal for us and I barely think about it almost all the time. I never think about it until I read somebody talking about it and, oh, people still think that? Oh, interesting. Which I know I'm not trying to again be glib about that, but for me, I thought it would be a bigger deal than it was and I'm so glad to be released from that expectation because I

don't think I would have done well. I don't think I would have thrived. But that's not at all to disparage anybody who does have a more traditional looking family. That's perfect and great and fantastic for anybody else. It's just this is how our family worked and I'm grateful that I don't think that this is a black and white issue.

Crystal: Yeah. When I think a lot of that is, I mean definitely the religious subculture, but also maybe Texas during that time because I think even friends that were outside of religious subculture, it was just more common. It's just socially and culturally to have the woman stay at home and not work, you know? I think things were a little more affordable back then. It is really true that wages have not increased much. Things are more challenging. It is harder to be middle class than it was. Part of it was also just, I think, I'm hoping lots of things have changed and lots of places where people feel that freedom to do what is right for their family. And that might be that you, the woman stays at home and that's great. But I think it's wonderful to know that it's a choice. You can choose whatever is best for your family and if what is best for your family looks more traditional, then great. Don't feel weird about that. But also know that it doesn't have to, if that is not best for your family, I think.

Tsh: I think what probably ends up being more the case in our modern era is that things change all the time. There might be a season where you're not working and your husband is and then it's going to change where you both work or maybe your husband then stays at home and then you go out to work or you work from home. There's never this one life path where this is how it's always going to look, where you can look back and say, my mom always stayed at home and my dad always went to an office. I don't think kids will say that anymore. I think there's a lot more of a messy middle, which I like actually.

Crystal: Yeah, absolutely.

Tsh: Then the last thing, honestly, this is just a vague miscellaneous other pile is that my life goals and priorities have really changed then from what I thought they were when I was 18. I didn't really know at the time what mattered most and honestly I presume I'm still learning this. I think that's one of these lifelong things we all learn and maybe shift over time. A few examples for me is that I feel like physical health matters a lot more than I used to think. I think I just used to think that was secondary or maybe that was for the athletic driven people. For me it's just one of these it's not for me, I'm more cerebral, but really I care so much more about my health when it comes to getting enough sleep and exercising. That's just more of my day to day than I ever would have guessed at the time. Along with that, mental health matters a lot more. I don't even want to say than I used to think. I don't think I even thought about that.

Crystal: I don't think we even used that term when we were kids at all.

Tsh: I know. This is definitely a byproduct of our era where this is much more common to talk about. My daughter is 14 and we've already talked about depression, anxiety and all those things and it just did not come up in our household. I don't really think I thought of it as a thing until I personally was diagnosed with depression and it was like, oh so this is a very common, you can be any sort of person and this is a reality for you. Now I'm much more aware of mental health, my own, other people's and how important that is and the role it plays in life goals and priorities.

Another thing for me is, I mean this is a little smaller, but I did get into this in the post is that travel matters a lot. I think I used to think of it as something only for the super wealthy cause we didn't travel a lot in our family and it was definitely mostly closer road trips. But to me it's just much more of a priority than I ever guessed it would be.

I think the important thing I just want to hit on with that is that it has changed my worldview from more global where it used to be a little more nationalistic. I think I was just very much America centric and I don't think I did that on purpose. I think it was just one of those, I didn't know what I didn't know things and that travel helped me see what I didn't know and what the rest of the world was like. And as an American, I should care about the world, and that actually informs my voting now as an American, to get back to that first point or one of the earlier points.

Finally, this is just a vague way of saying, Kyle and I have the saying, and this helped us decide back in the day, a few years ago to move from Oregon back to Texas. We had this saying called people over trees.

Crystal: Ooh, what does that mean?

Tsh: Yeah. We prefer Oregon when it comes to geography, climate, in terms of quality of life in the outdoors sense of things. It's hard to beat the beauty of the Pacific northwest when it comes to just eye candy but also when it comes to interacting with nature. It was a high priority in our life up there and it still is, which is why we are going up there this summer again, but we said people over trees because what we determined was ultimately people aka relationships matter more than for us, trees or just a certain type of lifestyle that was still nebulous but had to do with for us the natural world. That doesn't mean obviously, that means you should not live in the Northwest cause you could still be about people over trees up there and we still talk about it all the time. What I mean is this is really reflective of all of life, interacting with neighbors, family, friends, my ideals, just putting people and relationships above my own

preferences and above my own ideal on paper ideas versus ideal in reality when it comes to what does it look like to be a good neighbor, what does it look like to be a good daughter and sister and friend. I don't know if that makes any sense. But for me that's a shift that I think maybe just comes from age. When I left when I was 18 you just can't help but have these pictures of what life might be like and you're just always surprised how things turn out. That's definitely a big way for me.

Crystal: I definitely thought that I would have a more nomadic life after college, but now I so appreciate longterm relationships and friends that you've had a long time and that consistency in a neighborhood and in a community. I definitely understand that

Tsh: [00:29:13](#) In all of this to wrap up, I think what's important to say is that I actually really had a happy childhood with lots of support and encouragement and I still have a great relationship with my parents. "Changing my mind" about these things haven't been from a huge event or some form of rebellion for me. There's been some deconstruction for sure, but it's not out of, I'm gonna stick it to the man or shoot the finger at my childhood. It's nothing like that. It's been a slow process of just maturation and opening myself up to other voices and ideas. Lots of travel. That's a huge one. Just shifting to more of a learner's posture than I had when I was 18 and I was just so sure I knew more than I actually did. That's ultimately what these changes are about. I think most all of us can agree that it's just inevitable whenever you're growing up. It's just a part of getting older and realizing what you don't know.

Segment Two

Tsh: [00:33:19](#) Crystal, you talk to us this week about counseling and the role of counseling in your life so why don't you start us off with what you wrote about with your post there.

Crystal: Sure. My main point is really, related to when I was younger, I thought, very similar of that, as I've gotten older, I have embraced the role of paying a professional to help you progress. Whether that is a coach, a business coach, or a therapist or a counselor or a fitness coach or a psychologist or spiritual director or whatever area it is that you want to grow, I now would say the financial investment to me is so worth it. It is just hands down. There's no question. That is definitely one big way that I've changed since I was younger because I've talked about how much I like to research things and learn about things and I used to just think, oh, but especially now like there's so much free information I can just go figure it out myself.

Tsh: [00:34:25](#) I think I also thought that to pay for something meant there was something broken that needed fixing and paying for a therapist is only for when you're really doing bad. That was my perspective.

Crystal: I think for me, why would I pay for something I could "get for free?" And I even had this idea of why can't friends or aka people, I don't have to give money to, meet these needs. Right. Why can't I just talk through this with my best friend? Why do I need to go to a therapist? Why can't I just invite my friend coffee and we have a conversation or when it comes like a business coach, there's so much information. Why do I need to talk to someone? I could just go read a book.

This might be obvious for other people. I have a good friend who her default is always to phone a friend and talk to a human or I'm like, but let me Google it first and read five different perspectives on it and then I maybe will talk to someone. Recently even, I was telling her, I had this HR related question and I was I haven't really been to finding the answers online and she's like, oh, well why don't you call my friend who is HR professional? I was thinking, but because I should be able to find it, you know? But her instinct was always call someone, talk to a person, which I love but isn't my instinct.

This has been a big shift for me is really when you find the right person who can help you with your problem, it is so valuable. The investment, especially like you were talking about, right? In physical health and mental, I mean, I would say for me, even investing in a business coach helped free up time where then I could go exercise. I think when you identify the need and then you find the right person to help propel you faster, where you might get there already. This is my biggest realization, especially when I went to counseling and therapy was, I think I would get there eventually on my own because I journal a lot and I read a lot of books that would help me grow. But I got there faster with help and I think that is true both with, I've had a business coach, I've had multiple business coaches and gone to lots of different therapists, counselors. That is my biggest realization is when you find the right person, you'll get where you are going faster or where you wanted to go faster. Not necessarily that you won't still have learning detours but that it just helps accelerate the process. For me, that ends up having incredible results in other areas of life. When I got a business coach it freed me up mentally where I felt like I could devote more energy to parenting.

Tsh: I'm very much the same way with you. I will read a book, I will do all the googles, I will do a million things before I actually talk to somebody. I wonder what that says. Maybe it's a personality thing, like I'm a highly autonomous, I mean that's one of my highest values is to be autonomous. But I also wonder if that because we have Google at our fingertips, we just think we should know what we're doing or if we just worked hard enough we could find the answers. Whereas,

perhaps what we are looking for is an always googleable because it does involve a person to person relationship sometimes that it's just more effective.

Crystal: For me, also the financial thing was a barrier. I thought why spend money if I can figure it out myself? I think with business is the easiest one, right? I invested in a business coach and there is an actual bottom line that helped me, I don't have like a figure like, oh, it was 10 x my previous income. It's nothing like that. But it definitely lowered my stress in my business and helped me clarify and focus on the things that I wanted, which increased income but was for me was more primarily about my mental space about my business and trying to get it how I wanted it, which was both more money but really for me better boundaries and really making it what I want, creating the role for myself that I wanted and doing that helped me bring my values into every area of life because I finally got my business where I wanted it and what I wanted it to look like. When I did that, it was the rest of my life opened up because it didn't feel like my business was consuming more than it should have.

A couple of points I definitely want to make. The first thing that you have to do on your own is to do the work, to know what is the area that you want to grow? You have to do the work to know what do I want out of this relationship? What would success look like? And then you can identify the right person. There was even a moment for me where I realized from, I went to therapy for a long, had a great therapist for a long time after my divorce and then I realized, okay, I still need some help but it's not really therapy anymore. It shifted into, okay, now I need a business coach who is still in tune with the emotional parts of running a business but not my therapist anymore. I still do check ins but not necessarily the same role so there's that what is my need right now and who is the right person for that?

Tsh: I think that's also helpful to remember from a financial standpoint that sometimes when we look at the numbers and we think, I cannot make this part of my line item budget forever endeavor to instead maybe think about could I use a therapist for six months and then revisit whether this was financially doable or for example, because I've done all the things too. I've done spiritual direction and therapy and life coaching, business coaching for the lightest, a life coaching I did was with my business coach and I paid for a six session connection with her. I knew how much it would be from start to finish. I don't know if that's helpful for anyone listening, thinking about all this and just seeing all the numbers fly up like, oh my gosh, this costs so much money so maybe it's not forever and ever, but it's for a season.

Crystal: Yes, absolutely. I understand there are seasons of life where you're like, I cannot find an extra \$15. I know that is very real. I think there are other seasons where you feel like you couldn't fit it in the budget. But for me, I found there were

times where I thought, if I am taking care of myself in this way and investing in therapy, I actually have on a practical level, more energy to cook from scratch so I could save money in my grocery or eating out budget or I have other ways in which I was trying to like manage my emotional stress, which resulted in spending money on other areas. Then when I was taking care of myself, I had more capacity to save money in that area basically. I know that's not possible for every budget, but the other way I think of it, it's just like health insurance to me, even though I've paid out of pocket for these things, but I'm investing in my longterm health because obviously, I mean we all know now, right? Stress really affects your body. If you're not dealing with a lot of these things, it will affect your health later on, if not currently. I think there's so many, I don't have a link to a study, but there's so many studies that have proven the intense connection between your mental and emotional state and your body. That's one thing that makes it really easy for me to think of okay, I'm probably saving myself something later on because I'm dealing with all this now.

Tsh: It reminds me of this Italian proverb that I've heard once that says basically better to pay the grocer now than the doctor later. I think it's that idea. That's a literal obvious physical health thing, but I think that could be the same for mental health. It's preventative and it's doing the healthy things. It's taking your vitamins now so that you don't need prescription drugs later in whatever form that might look like, whether that's your business or your mental health or whatever.

Crystal: Absolutely. One other point that I think is really important, I tried to look up the statistic, but I remember my sister actually telling me one time that it usually takes someone, when we're talking about a marriage and family therapist, counselor person, it often takes someone four tries to find the right person that's a good fit for you.

Tsh: [00:42:47](#) Really? Wow, that's helpful to know.

Crystal: I don't know where, she just told me this and it just resonated and ringed true, but I haven't been able to find the statistic. I think that is really helpful that when I first went, the very first therapist counselor person I went to, she was terrible. She was terrible. I didn't know that. I mean I was also in an unhealthy relationship and so unfortunately that just contributed to it because I thought already was feeling like, oh, I'm just the problem and then wow, this is still hurtful. Only later once I'd had really great, her whole perspective and philosophy behind counseling was not a good fit for me, especially my situation at the time. Obviously there's that balance of you need to be open to looking at your stuff and being wrong and someone helping you through that, right? But it's also really okay, this is not the right fit. It's okay to start off the relationship with I'm interested in a trial. What does it look like to just have a 15 minute

consultation over the phone? Find those ways where you can test someone out because they want it to be a good fit for them too, and the right person. Especially if you're talking about like life coach or business coach, there are so many different philosophies about how to help people and it's okay that you don't know all about it, but it's also okay that there are lots of people that are not the right fit for you. When you find that person that is the right fit, it makes all the difference and it's worth the effort to find that person. It can be awkward to be like, actually I don't want to meet up again, but it is so worth it when you find the right person.

Tsh: [00:44:32](#) I'll say even not only is it okay to change for example, therapists again and again until you find the right one. It's okay to shift your particular needs. For example, a few years ago I thought I could use some counseling or some therapy. I started meeting with a licensed counselor and I think it took about three or four sessions. It's interesting when I realized I don't think I need counseling, actually I think I need coaching, and there's a difference between the two now, especially now that I am in the process of getting life coach certified. I see it more and more that, in this example of counseling is looking backwards and coaching is looking forwards. That's a broad brush stroke, but you know what I mean. I would be sitting in her office and thinking, well, I don't need to keep talking about my childhood or I don't need to keep rehashing some of these things that I have healed from and I'm okay about, I actually want to make a game plan about what's next for me. And it hit me, I done coaching before. Why didn't I think of going back to coaching? I basically told this counselor, thanks, but I'm good now and hired a coach the next week and it was exactly what I needed, but I didn't know until I made an appointment with a counselor and sat in on a few sessions.

Crystal: I think it's important to just accept that process that you might aim at one kind of professional and then realize, oh, you know what, actually I know that exercising would help my mental health. What I really need is someone to hold me accountable to exercise or I don't need to talk anymore about it. I need to do it, but I need someone to hold my hand and help me do it. I need accountability or whatever it is. Being open to the type of professional that might help you in this season and that that will change. Most professionals, it's not personal for them. They get it. Even though sometimes for us as the consumer of their services, it can feel awkward. I can say knowing more about the other side now I think a lot of them are happy for you to graduate from their services to the next one.

Tsh: I remember my therapist one time about 10 years ago, he told me he knows he's doing his job whenever he's not needed anymore. He's literally trying to work himself out of a job with every client. Whenever he told me that directly, I

think that was in the first session and this was when I first started going to a therapist, so I felt weird about it, when he told me that, it really lightened the mood and helped me see, okay, he's not hoping now I'm going to get a new client to pay me all kinds of money. He's hoping that I can move on and be free from this. Like I was mentioning earlier with my business coach and I paid for a five, six session thing. Whenever I'm thinking about my coaching practice down the road, I don't want to coach somebody forever and ever. That's not to say that it's bad to need therapy for years or to meet with a coach for years and years off and on. But I think the season thing, what you just said is the most important thing to remember that just because you're doing something now, does it mean it's forever and that you can't change your mind and go back and forth between services and what you might need.

Crystal: Yes, absolutely. I had one business coach who was really, it was the first one that I tried, was not the best fit for me, but I learned so much actually. I learned even I was able to identify a lot about how I was, oh, you have all these very specific ideas about what things should look like and I've identified for myself now that actually that that is not my perspective and so you're not the right fit for me. But I hadn't even identified that was my perspective. Even though he wasn't the right person, I still learned a lot through the process. It wasn't just a worthless investment because it even helped me clarify for myself what I wanted in my business, which wasn't some of the conventional this is how you should do it, you know? And it helped me identify, oh yeah, I don't want that and I now know that and so now I'm going to find someone who's going to help me take steps for this unique style of business that I want.

Tsh: I think this all comes down to just embracing this idea of continuing education and it looks like a book sometimes and it looks like getting really smart wisdom from someone who is professionally trained and has been there and has real life experience they can share with you. I think what you're doing here Crystal, with your post and in this chat is really helping dispel the myth that something like therapy is only for it's something to be ashamed of if you need it. Or something like coaching is extra or not necessary because you can Google it or read a book. I think you're really helping people see the bigger picture with that.

Crystal: One other thing I want to say is I have a friend who was about to have a baby and they went to some premarital counseling and I was suggesting, hey, I think it might be helpful even though you feel like you're not desperately need it. But if you can fit in a few more couples therapy counseling sessions before your baby's born, I think that would really help you because post-baby can be really hard, you know? It's not necessarily that you're feeling like I have a big problem right now as much as let's invest a little bit more and really building this connection that we know will be strained by sleepless nights and exhaustion and emotional

overwhelm. It doesn't have to be, I went through a divorce, but it doesn't have to just be that, it really can be like a tuneup. It is so valuable. I absolutely feel like no one should ever be embarrassed about needing help. If anything, I'm impressed by people who can identify and are willing to accept help and say, I could figure this out but I also want to be someone who can receive mentorship or professional help that there are people who are trained to propel you forward. I think almost every couple would benefit from even just a few sessions of therapy or counseling. It can be so valuable, even again, it doesn't have to be a longterm thing, but just a little bit to give you some tools to identify a few things in your [inaudible] that would bring so much more fun and freedom. I just really think like everyone should consider it if they can possibly fit in their budget. And if you feel like you can't but you want it one day, I would suggest like find some books in that area. If you're reading a business book, right? And you're feeling like, okay, yeah I think I have some more questions I really want to talk to a human about or read a book that's related to there's one by Henry Cloud that I'm thinking of, *Boundaries*? Read a book like that and take notes about does this feel like I want to dive into some of this with a person? Or if you're more focused on habits of health and future goals then you may want a life coach. You can still do some of the work now to identify what's the professional help I need to move forward. Even if you feel like I can't fit in my budget yet.

Tsh: That's a great point to do what you can do now. It comes back to that thing that we talk about so often on the podcast. We should just rename it the idea of partial solutions. I think that's a great form of partial solutions. If you can't afford a therapist now, what can you do instead with the end goal of hopefully being able to meet with a therapist because it's so important or whatever that might look like for you. I think that's so smart. My example, I was literally talking about this with my daughter last night because she knows that I do this membership site for my workouts and she was talking about my ideal is actually to go to a gym and to take a class. I told her, me too, I actually prefer that. And she also said to meet with a health coach one on one. And I said, me too. The problem is one, that's really expensive and two, the local rec center, none of the classes line up with my schedule. It's easy for me to write that off of say, oh well, I won't do anything at all, but instead the partial solution is signing up for this \$5 membership site and working out from home. I'm not saying I do this perfectly, but I've come a long way in this department. I think that can be applied in this area as well. Just like you said, like what's the next best thing? Even if it's not ideally how you want things to work out.

Segment Three

Tsh: [00:53:14](#) Stephanie, I am really grateful you're taking the time to chat because not only are you in Guatemala for just a few more days, but you're also getting sick. So I'm really sorry, but thank you for being willing to talk. You've been in Guatemala for a while, so fill us in a little bit on what the highlights have been and what are your favorite parts?

Stephanie: [00:53:35](#) Yeah, it's so crazy that we're leaving in just a few days. We've been here for two months now and this morning we actually, me and Caden and Abigail have all been studying Spanish every weekday morning at the same Spanish school. This morning we had our graduation and that was a little bit sad to realize that it's actually over. We're actually leaving from this place. Although I'm proud of us for sticking with it and for how much we studied, I feel like we all got a lot better. As a family, we've just come to love this town a lot more. We've been staying in Panajachel, which is probably the most developed town around Lake Atitlan and we love the area we love the Mayan people and the culture here. We also went into Antigua, which is a really amazing colonial city, closer to Guatemala City. And we went there for Semana Santa, which is like the big Easter celebrations and the Antigua is known for all of its processions. That was amazing. That was definitely one of the highlights of our time here in Guatemala because it's one of those once in a lifetime experiences to be there and every day we would see one or two processions and they're just such a sensory experience. The sounds and the sights and the smells of the smoke and the incense and, oh man, it was so incredible.

Tsh: [00:55:02](#) I love winter travels intersect with major celebrations that only happen once a year or just every now and it works out so well. Like when we were there for Loi Krathong in Thailand. It's just one of these, oh my gosh, how can we not fully take part? Because who knows when we'll ever be here again specifically at this time.

Stephanie: [00:55:21](#) For sure. That's what it felt like to us. Overall I'm just really grateful for this time, although we are excited to go to Cuba and to go home.

Tsh: I bet. It makes a lot of sense. All right, well let's get right into our listeners' questions. We've got two that are similar, so we'll tackle them. The first one is from @tiffanyatolbert and she says, I want to travel alone, but my family says it's not safe. How do I reassure them? And then a follow up, Instagram follower @flowermo2125, she says, how do you assess the safety of places you travel? Let's get into what it means to travel safely, both the preparation before you choose how to go somewhere and then how to stay safe once you're there. Steph, do you have any opening thoughts for us?

Stephanie: [00:56:06](#) Yeah, I have a couple of opening thoughts. The first one is that it can seem scary to travel to different places when we start to look at the media,

when we start to look at travel advisories on government websites, things like that. If you were to just look at a map of the world and you look at the way they've got it all color coded according to what's safe and not safe, you would feel like, gosh, I can't travel anywhere. I just feel like that's not a realistic picture. I think it would be good if you and I can talk a little bit more about maybe some, just some better ways to assess safety. I think it's just worth saying upfront that for all of the things that we read about and we see on TV, people around the world are good and they are kind and they are helpful and so much more often than not we have just been blown away by generosity and hospitality and people wanting to help us even though they had no reason to. That has been our experience almost everywhere we've traveled. And I just think it's such a good thing to remember when we start getting into the nitty gritty of safety and what places are safe to go or not. Just to remember that most people are good and they're just trying to live their lives just like we are.

Tsh: [00:57:31](#) Everything you've said I completely endorse. I think it's also good to remember what do we mean when we say safe? There's a difference between healthy risks and safe. There is a weird sense I have found and I can't really put my finger on the specifics other than just when sometimes places that might classically be deemed more unsafe actually feel safer to me because of a community spirit and because of the individual people, like you just said. For example, we've been in countries where according to the government you have to be on alert. But when you get to know real people, when you know your neighbors, when you recognize the store owner down the street and you get to know people, you actually feel safer because you have the sense of like, oh, these people look out for each other and they're willing to do the same for me. It's so much more about your posture as a traveler than what any particular government says. That doesn't mean you just say stick it to the man and just make unwise decisions. But really and truly there's so much more that defines safe than just what are the statistics of this one huge country that has lots of different places in within their borders.

Stephanie: [00:58:44](#) That's a really good point and maybe where I would start off with is that if you were to just look at the travel advisory world map, you see an entire country get shaded off in a particular color, but that's not really accurate to what's going on within that country because it depends on what province or state or department of that country that you're in, whether you're near the border of another country or whether you're more inland. It depends on whether you're in a big city, whether you're in a small town, it's just so different wherever you are. I think it's really important to step back from putting a label on a country as a whole and instead find out about the different parts of that country and which ones might be safer and maybe not so safe.

If you were to look at the map and see the countries that we've just been past three months in Columbia, Ecuador, and Guatemala, they would all be listed as places where you should be exercising and a much higher degree of caution, places that are potentially dangerous but when I did my research for the places that we were going, I did find that there were some places that I thought, huh, we're not going to go there. That doesn't sound like a safe region of the country to go. But like 80% of the rest of the country seemed really safe and totally accessible to us and so we made our plans around that. That's just a really good thing to take into account. Dig In and find out, where within a country could I go?

Tsh: [01:00:11](#) It actually reminds me a few days ago, my mom and I were chatting over lunch and I mentioned to her how much I was in the mood to be in Turkey, that I missed Turkey. Wouldn't that be fun right now to be in Turkey? And she said, well, not right now. And I was like, what do you mean? And she's like, well, you know, some of the stuff on the news. And then she thought and said, I guess that's way out east and you guys weren't living in east. I guess Izmir would be okay. Yeah, for sure Izmir is completely safe. And it reminded me back whenever we used to live in Turkey, sometimes my parents would email, are you okay? Is everything fine? And we would have no clue what they were talking about. And then it turns out, oh, they read something on the news about some bomb that went off in Turkey, forgetting that Turkey is really big, and because a bomb went off somewhere else does not mean it affected me in any way in our little apartment on the west coast. Even if it was in the same city. If you think about if we were to go on what's safe here in North America, just based on watching the news, we would think everywhere in the world was just fraught with danger and we'd never leave our house. But you know that your city by and large is safe just because something happened somewhere in your city that didn't affect you. That doesn't mean it's hugely unsafe now.

Stephanie: [01:01:35](#) Well, and I think it's also maybe a little bit good to point out that when you talk to people in other countries, for example, about traveling in cities in the United States, their reaction is, oh, so dangerous. I would never travel to some of the cities, which I just find so ironic. They actually have the same perception of danger where we live as we have where they are.

Tsh: [01:01:58](#) Totally. That's a great point. Maybe this is bringing it into, I think it was Tiffany's question about my family says it's not safe, to really consider the source. I'm not saying, don't listen to a word your parents saying, I don't even know how old Tiffany is, we could be talking 18 or we could be talking in her fifties, I have no idea, consider whether the source of person saying it's not safe, knows what he or she is talking about or maybe where she's getting this

information. Is it from just watching the news or is it from on the ground experience that was recent.

Stephanie: [01:02:34](#) I think that leads into just a good opportunity to talk about where do you actually get good accurate information about what safe are not safe. I think we can just flat out say the media is not the place to get that information.

Tsh: That's very true.

Stephanie: Where I like to get my information, actually, I find up to date guide books. You don't want to take a guide book that was written five years ago. You really want to get the most up to date version of the year that you're traveling. But I find the guide books, but especially ones I'm like Lonely Planet or the Rough Guides, I feel like they do a really good job of trying to include information about recent travelers scams, places where it isn't safe to go hiking alone in the mountains or they really try to alert you to that to parts of the country that just aren't a good idea to visit. But they also give you a lot of information about the culture and just different things about how that country is functioning today. I feel like you can get so much insight by reading that. I almost always buy a guide book for any new country that we're going through for more than a week because I feel like I just learn a lot and these books typically are very honest about what you can expect. An example is that we wanted to do a hike recently here in Guatemala on the lake that we're on, but we had read that there could be bandits, sometimes will bother people and they will block you from continuing on your way until you pay them a large amount of money. And I was like, oh, maybe this isn't a really great idea. But then when I dug in and researched a little bit more, I found out that as long as you hire a guide and there are tons of guides that you can choose from, you don't get any problems. They only bother solo travelers. You simply have to find a good guide and then it's not a problem. We went and we had a fantastic time and felt totally safe. I feel like you can get a lot of information like that by I'm reading up to date books.

Tsh: [01:04:28](#) That's really good. I would also say, if you are wanting to use the internet to do some research, instead of looking at official statements or even from more just generic news sites to consider, I mean this sounds crazy, but consider actual travel bloggers or YouTubers or Instagrammers or whatever, actual people who are traveling somewhat currently and maybe even look for a demographic similar to yours. If you're considering taking your children who are, maybe age 10 and under, look for those family travelers who were recently in that country or if you're a single woman, I follow quite a few bloggers that are single women who travel independently all the time and they will talk about their recent experiences in those countries. You'll get a feel for whether it's safe or not and the fact that they were even just there should tell you that it's pretty largely safe. I can't speak for all of them, but perhaps you could even just ask a quick

question online. Let's use you, for example, Stephanie, you're in Guatemala with your kids. If someone was considering taking younger kids in Guatemala, they could ping you on Instagram really quickly. Like, hey, we're thinking of going this summer. Would you say it's thumbs up on bringing your kids overall? And you'd probably be able to answer quickly yet. Sure. No problems. Just be safe. Use those people as resources.

Stephanie: [01:05:51](#) Absolutely. That would be the second thing that I would recommend is, that's what I do is we look on blogs and we look on vlogs. Then the other thing I do is reach out to if we have any friends or we know people who are ex pats, people who are missionaries in different places, we'll also reach out and just ask them, what do we need to know? Those are the people who are they're there, they're on the ground and they can be really, really valuable. When we were in the Middle East and Africa in particular, the contacts that we had were just so invaluable in giving us real information, and really help to determine the choices that we made while we were there.

Tsh: [01:06:28](#) And then I would say, I don't know if you're ready to move into once you're on the ground but I would say once you're there, this sounds so nebulous and I know some of these listeners are wanting a checklist of questions that I might ask, which is just not my style is pay attention to that inner radar or that mama bear instinct you might have if you're a parent and go with your gut whenever you are traveling out and about within a place. Let's say you're going to somewhere that's completely safe, but just like everywhere around the world, you might be in a situation like at a market in the evening or somewhere where you're considering walking by yourself at night. Just use your, I guess common sense, but also just keep your radar up and decide. If I don't feel comfortable walking home at night, go ahead and pay for the Uber to get you all the way back to your guest house. Or if you are not comfortable walking through this market with just your kids consider waiting until you've got somebody else with you, some other adult Do you know what I mean?

Stephanie: [01:07:29](#) I definitely agree. It's more than just common sense, like there is a level of alertness, of paying attention to what you're sensing around you. Do you feel good in that situation? Also sometimes it's about how we, individually, personally, how we are feeling because one person could feel totally confident in a particular situation and another one could feel less confident. I think you have to go with how you're feeling and make decisions that are good for you. Sometimes here we'll walk home at night and then sometimes we're like, oh, we don't really like the neighborhood we're in, I think we're going to catch a taxi instead and we just base that on where we are and what's going on and how we're feeling at that moment.

Tsh: [01:08:14](#) That's good. Ultimately for somebody listening who maybe wants to experience more cross cultural travel but it hasn't done much and there is a little bit of that fear, consider starting your whole experience of going internationally somewhere that you know from experience and is largely considered safe. There's tons of countries around the world that by and large are very, very safe. If you're North American for example, consider going to France or Australia or somewhere that you know, okay, I can ease into this whole concept of traveling and immersing myself in different cultures. And that's okay. That doesn't mean you're not doing something really cool and baller and out of your comfort zone by going somewhere different. Just because it's maybe classically quote easy doesn't mean that's not still an adventure and you'll have a great time.

Stephanie: [01:09:14](#) Do you want to give just a few travel safety tips that we've learned are that we practice or that we might want to recommend to somebody who's traveling single?

Tsh: Yeah, go for it.

Stephanie: Just a few basic strategies things we always practice is particularly not to flaunt your wealth when you're traveling in a developing countries. I either leave my diamond engagement ring at home or I flip it around on the inside of my hand so that people can't see it. I just keep the jewelry that I wear pretty simple. You don't want to carry a lot of cash on you. It's better to just only bring what you need and also to split up your cards so that if anything were to happen or a card make the stolen or compromised, you have a backup card.

We found we need to be really vigilant when we have all of our luggage with us. I will say the biggest risk in most places is simply something like a robbery. Obviously that doesn't sound very pleasant to any of us, but that's basically the only thing that's really happened to us and so we've just learned to be especially vigilant, like when we have all of our luggage with us, when we're sitting and we're waiting for a bus or we're in a public place. Keeping all the luggage together in one pile and making sure that somebody is always watching it. If I'm sitting somewhere and I have a bag at my feet, I'll stick my foot through one of the bag straps, those kinds of things, or even wearing a cross body bag and keeping it on the front of you so that you can always put a hand in front of it if you're on a busy subway or you're in a market and nobody can touch it without you noticing. I also like antitheft bags which are intended for travel, things that can't be slashed. Travelon, Pack Safe and Baggilini, all make really good purses and travel bags that are meant to prevent you from being stolen from.

Tsh: [01:10:59](#) I'm putting in the show notes, actually my travel purse that has become pretty much my year round purse. I love it so much. It's from Travel On.

It is super durable and I love that it's not only antitheft, meaning it's hard to slash but they also have little, I mean I don't want to call them locks, they are locked zippers in a way where you have to clip them on so that if you're in a crowded subway or whatever, that someone can't just easily unzip your purse. I use this all the time. It's a cross body bag and I love it. It's washable. It's my favorite person ever. It's so good. I use it all the time, not just for travel.

Stephanie: [01:11:37](#) Do we want to give a few suggestions just for single travelers, especially females? I feel like that's a particular, it's a little bit special, is unique, I guess.

Tsh: [01:11:45](#) It's a sub genre yet I think there's quite a few listeners who fill that niche. I used to be one. I traveled pretty extensively internationally when I was single. So, absolutely.

Stephanie: [01:11:55](#) I'll give a few of my tips and then I'd love to hear some of yours because you have traveled more solo than I have. A few things for me or actually what I would recommend to my teenage daughter when she wants to start traveling solo in a few years, I would never stay in a mixed or a coed dorm room in a hostel. I would only stay in a female only dorm or else I would choose a private room. I would also be just cautious about going out at night unless I was in a highly public place or even better if you meet a group of other travelers and you can hook up with some of them so that you're together with other people. I would stick to more official forms of transportation at night, like registered taxis or Ubers. This is an experience that I've had in our travel is just learning to be aware of what is considered modest and immodest in a particular place. It's not to say that you have to dress like the women do in that place. When I'm in the Middle East, I'm not going to dress like the women there too because that's not who I am, it's not the clothes that I have, but I am going to be aware of what would be considered immodest. Sometimes I see young female travelers and they're dressed in clothes that they might wear back home in North America or at a beach. I just get worried for them because I think you do really need to be a little bit more aware and just be willing to adapt what you're wearing for the culture that you're at so I think it's always a good idea to just research what would be considered culturally modest inappropriate clothing.

Tsh: [01:13:24](#) That's 100% what I would've said. I've spent a considerable amount of time in the Middle East or in Muslim majority countries and honestly everybody there, like 99% of the people are so friendly and it is so safe. But just in general, they have different gender dynamics and different ways of interacting with each other. And it's usually just deemed safer if you interact more with people of your same sex. If you are a woman, talk to the women around if you can help it, like if you need directions or if you are wanting to, I don't want to say be completely blocked off and don't even buy something from a shop

keeper that's male, but generally speaking, pay attention to what other women around you are doing and consider following suit. Don't go into men's only places, like the tea houses. Also I learned, in fact it was funny when I came back to North America, I had to retrain myself, but I learned walking down the street, it's usually best not to make direct eye contact with men. I don't mean that to say that every man is terrible and is going to do something horrific. It's just generally best practice. This is what women do there as well, just to totally walk by, have a pleasant look on your face, just don't make direct eye contact. That's very common and it will feel rude to you as a North American. It's really weird how that feels, but in general that's what I would do. I like your perspective of what would I tell my teenage daughter because I can very easily see my teenage daughter wanting to start traveling on our own in a few years and I totally want to release her into the world doing that well. I agree with everything you've said. The only other one I would add is to not just put in your ear buds and zone out whenever you're in public places, that that's perfectly fine if you're in a safe open air cafe and you have awareness of all your surroundings, but it's very easy to lose track of your stuff or who's around you or what's going on whenever you have ear buds on because it can just make you inwardly focused and not aware of your surroundings.

Stephanie: [01:15:36](#) I think that's a great suggestion and I would just wrap it up by a story that I heard from a fellow traveler here in Guatemala with us. She said she was in Fiji when she was a younger woman. She was traveling solo and she was taking a bus and she started to feel a little bit uncomfortable on the bus just as a single young lady. Then she noticed some Fijian women at the back of the bus who were all sitting together and they caught her eye and they waved her over and they basically circled around her and they said, you're going to stay with us to be safe because you shouldn't be sitting alone by yourself on a bus like this. Those women, they took care of her all the way to where she needed to go. She had this epiphany of, why have I not thought to seek out the women and the local culture where I am? Why don't I try to find the places where the women are and to learn from the way that they do things? I just thought that that was so great. Not only how they protected her, but had she just learned to seek out the women as a safe place to be.

Tsh: [01:16:41](#) I love that. And plus, added bonus, you get a whole cultural experience. It's really fun. You get to know the locals and you can interact with them and maybe just have a different experience than you wouldn't have otherwise. Or even if you just choose to what you said at the top, stay at a hostel with other single people and you stay in a women's room or something like that, you can make friends that way. I have some in my favorite memories of staying in hostels in different parts of the world and going out for drinks and live music with total strangers and it ended up being so fun and those are memories to

keep. Definitely seeking out the locals and seeking out other likeminded travelers will not only keep you safe, but it'll really enhance your experience.

You can find Crystal at CrystalEllefsen.com on Instagram @[crystal.ellefsen](https://www.instagram.com/crystal.ellefsen) and keep up with me, I'm on Twitter @[Tsh](https://twitter.com/Tsh) and Instagram @[TshOxenreider](https://www.instagram.com/TshOxenreider) and of course at TheArtSimple.net where you can find my writing as well as Crystal's. Head to the show notes of this episode number 196 at thesimpleshow.com where you can find all sorts of things, links to things we talked about where you can sign up for my weekly email called Five Quick Things, how you can become a patron and support the work it takes to create the show for just a few dollars per month, as well as how to connect with Crystal and myself. The show is produced by Chad Michael Snavely and Jesse Montonya and thanks also to Caroline TeSelle, Andrea Debbink and my furry intern, Ginny. Thanks so much for listening. I am Tsh Oxenreider and I'll catch you back here soon.