

E42 - Rooted & Unwavering - Hylke Faber & Mary Jo West

Diana Belluomini 00:08

Welcome to rooted and unwavering, a podcast and radio show which features leaders from all walks of life in conversations about courageous connectedness. How do we stay connected to our best selves, especially when we are challenged, what becomes possible when we truly stay committed to our own and others greatness, also when we don't feel it. Join host hylke fauber, transformational coach, facilitator and award winning author of taming your crocodiles and his guests as they explore leadership greatness in today's episode of rooted and unwavering.

Hylke Faber 00:48

Well, welcome to rooted and unwavering episode 42 where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host, hylka Faber, and I'm here today with Mary Jo, West, Mary Jo, how are you today? So very, very blessed. Hylke, so looking forward to this, and I, I know your listeners, hopefully will get something positive out of this, and we thank them for listening and watching. Oh, beautiful. Well, I feel very honored and blessed to sit with you. I'm going to introduce Mary Jo in a moment more properly. I just want to notice that she has been called the First Lady of TV news in Phoenix, and also has numerous Emmys other and other prestigious awards on her name. But that's not the main point of this podcast at all. It's about being rooted and unwavering. And so just before we go into the conversation with Mary Jo, just remind us, as we listen to this podcast what we're talking about, and why talk about rooted and unwavering as humans and as leaders. Well, when I think about it for myself, when I think about the people that I work with, I see us wavering and being unrooted. Quite often, it seems to be part of our makeup that our mind takes us to a place that later on, we think, Well, maybe that's not who I really wanted to be. And there's good news in that, which means that it's part of us that has awareness of who we aspire to be, that makes us taller on the inside, that makes us feel inspired. It says has us set up in our chairs. It has it open our hearts. It has us be friendly, kind, compassionate in in those places where parts of us are maybe want to shy back, it's a part of us that's here, and how do we lead from that place, especially when the external circumstances, or maybe even the internal circumstances of our mind or our feelings get a little challenges are a lot challenging. How do we do that? We have conversations with with leaders from all walks of life, so that we don't only learn frameworks, but we hear real stories, and I see myself sometimes surrounded by all these people that I've talked to or and that I admire, which Mary Jo is one standing around me when I'm in an hour of challenge, saying, Oh, you're right here, standing right beside you. And hopefully each of us can be that person for each other. So now let's talk about Mary Jo for a moment. Mary Jo comes with comes to us with such a beautiful background. When I first met Mary Jo, she was actually a person that I never met before. Didn't even know about while I was singing in a concert for a choir called Orpheus in Phoenix, and she was the back of the room as we're getting off stage and giving us very positive energy,



encouraging us. And that's one of the things that I love about Mary Jo. She's a beacon of hope and light and heartfulness and encouragement in a world that so sorely needs it, and she's been at it for a little while. She entered the Phoenix CBS local affiliate cool news in 1976 and became the first Prime Time anchor woman there she was called, as I said, the First Lady of TV news. She's won many, many top awards, including two Emmys, 13 Arizona Press Club Awards, the prestigious Peabody Award and the top national award, the Gracie from American women in radio and TV. Mary Jo was hired, also by CBS News Network to move to New York as one of the anchors for their all night newscast night watch. You may have seen her there. She was honored with many accolades, also for community service in the city of Phoenix. She was presented by the City of Phoenix. To the Martin Luther King Living the Dream Award for her work with the mentally ill. We learn more about that as he spent decades trying to dedicate others to the to help remove the stigma of mental illness, which, in her words, is not a weakness. And she was invited by Tipper Gore to speak at the White House Conference for mental health. Now, she's semi retired, and she serves her city, her state and our world in many ways, she has traveled to remote areas in Kenya to bring aid to a group of orphans there with HIV AIDS, she convinced her church there to here to build a well that they needed. She continues to inspire people to give back, and she embodies, I think, the light that came with her as she came in and also from many of the beautiful interactions he's had. He's interviewed presidents, flown with Mother Teresa, interviewed her since been so many things. One of the songs that she lives by, it seems to be what I heard about is brighten the corner where you are, which is a beloved church hymn that she sang as a child, and she's being described as, as that might be her theme song. I could talk about you, Mary, Jo for, for, I'm just gonna stop here right now. And your first question, which is, you did

Mary Jo West 06:35

that so well? I'm so you could have been an anchorman. Or maybe you are. You are in your own way, I

Hylke Faber 06:41

hope to be an anchorman for being rooted and wavering in wherever I am right. So tell us about what have you learned in your life and leadership? About connectedness. Tell us about that. Tell us about that.

Mary Jo West 06:59

People really, really long to have a connection. I think the biggest thing I've seen in my life is loneliness around the world, and we all want someone to look deep into our eyes, and we want to know that that person is listening, and that that person cares, and that what we have to say, or what they have to say, is very, very important and vital, so that connectedness is everything. And I have been given I feel by God. And I don't mean to be overly religious on this program, but I think I sprang from the wound caring about others, and I feel I received that from my mother, my grandmother, all the way down Andre up. So connectedness is everything, whether it's in our personal lives, of course, or our professional lives. It's the number one thing we need to have with people, and that's why I'm so grateful for this program, hylka, that you do 42 My goodness, we need more of we need more hylkes, and I loved your line. You



just said, it's important that we feel that we are standing tall inside. What a beautiful thing to say. And I think that's what your podcast is helping people to do to feel a little taller inside and love themselves.

Hylke Faber 08:26

So thank you for that. Mary. Jo, so how do you help yourself, starting with you stand tall on the inside, and maybe tell us about some of your experiences in your life, where you might have learned about that in very easy ways and maybe in harder ways. Because I think I'm fascinated about that, since it's so easy from Facebook stories and all these things about projecting, like, Oh, we've got it all together. And I'm very interested in these heroes journeys that I'm sure you've been on, and I can tell you've been on, tell us about that. How you've how have you found your inner illness? How do you continue to find that?

Mary Jo West 09:10

Well, as I said earlier, I do feel I am a woman of deep, deep faith and spirituality, and also I have finally learned that it's okay to lean on people, because for so long, I thought, well, I just have to do it myself, or it's not going to get done. And I have learned through the years that it's okay to lean and not just lean in, but to lean on people. And I think it's important that we always continue to love ourselves, because we are so told over and over by media, by whatever, that we're not pretty enough, or we're not smart enough, and we've got to turn off those voices and create our own voice in our head. Let me give you an example when I. Became the city of Phoenix's first Prime Time anchor woman. I sat next to a man who was my boss, who was an icon in Arizona. He was known by probably millions, but at least 1000s, and he did not like the idea of having this young woman half his age, sitting next to him. And at the time, he made my life miserable. He would say things horrible, horrible things to me seconds before we'd go in the air sexual kinds of things. And this was 1976 and that was back when, sort of that generation thought it was okay to say things like, what can I do to see your blank or let's play hide the weenie in the helicopter, or those kinds of things. And I had the luxury of having an amazing husband to go home to every night and cry and let it all out. And it took a long time for me to realize that it wasn't my issue, it was my co anchors issue. So I decided to learn from Bill. I decided that he knew so much about Arizona, so let's learn from him. Yes, he had that terrible trade of saying those things to me, but let me learn about politics in Arizona, which he knew like the back of the hand, let me learn from him. So six years later, when I left to go to Network News at the end of the newscast, he said that I had worked harder than anyone in the newsroom, and he actually allowed me to say his closing line that he would say every night on the news. And so day by day, I earned his respect, but it came at a great cost. It did because it hurt, and once in a while, I will hear those voices in my head, but I have learned, after all these years, to turn it off, to turn down the volume, whether it's literally, literally counting sheep before I go to sleep or doing multiplication tables, I get rid of it, and that's how I do it.

Hylke Faber 12:10

Going back to that time when you were half bills age, and you're starting off there, I can just imagine what that was like, the pressure, the excitement, the challenge, and also the hardship. How did you at that time keep it together? Because you're on prime time TV. So how do you do that? Well, you



Mary Jo West 12:35

know, I had, I did have to say, I have to admit, I had an inflated sense of of self importance. I truly felt at that time that I was carrying on my back women, the women of the world, and I was not not going to fail in that job. I because I was weak or whatever. So what I decided to do was to stand up for women stand up for the rights of others. In that platform, I had reaching 1000s of, eventually millions, every night, by doing stories that made a difference. You know, in the old days, when I started Women could only do grocery store stories and baby stories, not that those weren't important, but I decided I want to do a series on sexual assault. There had been a series of horrible, horrible rapes in Phoenix by people or a man doing it to older people, and I was horrified, but the man next to me anchoring the news wouldn't even say the word rape on the air, so I decided to do a four part series on rape, and that's what I called it rape, and a big TV Guide ad and in the newspaper, and I was the first person to stand up and say, hmm, let's get to the root of this. Why don't we go to Florence prison and interview rapist? And that was the first time in Arizona anyone had done that, man or woman. And I remember my videographer and I, we walked into the prison, the guard shut the door and said, You're on your own. So I was able, for whatever reason, to have courage. I look back now and see maybe I did have courage because I was determined to educate and let our viewers know that there is help out there. And that was the greatest, greatest part of being a news woman, was being able to help others.

Hylke Faber 14:34

I hear that sense of purposefulness and courage that held you up at the time, and I think that is such a powerful reminder where our little ego brain might go into I can't do this for myself if it's just about my little survival. And yet, if I can see myself in the bigger context, connect myself to that that automatically wires me. Or greater strength.

Mary Jo West 15:02

Well, that series resulted in my videographer and I receiving our first Emmy for that, and we realized that we that we were doing the right thing. And in fact, the second series I did was very controversial. No one had covered this in the Phoenix area, and that was on incest. So you can imagine that people were tuning in and basically thinking, what are they going to do next? But it wasn't for ratings. It was to heal. I think now in looking back, I wanted to be I was a wounded healer. I think we all are wounded healers, and that was my role at that time.

Hylke Faber 15:41

Should you you worked on programs about rape and and programs about incest, the two topics that I would understand, at least still today, are quite taboo for many people, and so can you tell us about what was the healing power of these programs for you and for the people that worked on it and for the people that saw them

Mary Jo West 16:09



well, the back then, we didn't have the social media that we have today, but the just the the hundreds of letters that came in, the hundreds of phone calls thanking us and and just, I know that we were able to let people know who had been sexually assaulted about the CENTER AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT in the Phoenix area, and they had many, many, many more people call and get help. So that was very, very encouraging. And again, the reason why I think I stayed in broadcasting for so long, because it's more than just car wrecks and and murders, as awful as that is and important to cover, but there is also the aspect, as you said, and we said, of healing.

Hylke Faber 16:54

And so tell us more about your own healing journey, because you you said, so beautifully, we're all wounded healers, raw wounded healers. So, so tell us about maybe some of the wounds that you've healed and and what's come from that. What has that given you? Well,

Mary Jo West 17:13

I was wounded in the fact that I was very mentally ill at a time in my career with bipolar disorder, and back at that time, you didn't talk about mental illness. And so at the very height of my popularity in Phoenix, I was secreted with a capital S and to Camelback Hospital, one of the finest mental hospitals in the country, because I I had mania, and I also had, at the end of that mania, the end of course of that is dark, dark, dark, clinical depression. Bottom line is I have a broken brain, which means the chemicals don't get to my brain like most people's chemicals do, and I need help to make those chemicals and the serotonin kick in. So fortunately, in the early 90s, that was when Prozac and other antidepressants were had been researched and developed for years, and I was able to get help and but back in 1981 when I was so very, very sick, those medications had not been developed yet, so at that time, the only thing that my psychiatrist said would help me would be shock treatments. Can you imagine being on the air and getting shock treatments? Now they call it ect. It's much kinder and gentler. But I had a series of three. Most people get 12, and that made me able to function again. Well, of course, I kept this secret. I mean, a year later, I'm at CBS News and New York. I'm not going to say in my interview with Dan Rather, oh, let's see. I'm a good writer. I'm an excellent reporter. I had shop treatments, and I'm good with people. You don't bring it up. It's a terrible, terrible secret, and I carried that secret until the early 90s, and that's when the wonderful Mental Health Association, it's now called Mental Health America, the local leaders, came to me because they knew, and they said, Will you go forward with your story? Because you have been able to come back stronger. And not only did I go forward with my story locally, but Oprah Winfrey invited me on her program, and I was able to share the story that there is hope and help for those of us with broken brains,

Hylke Faber 19:39

there's hope and help for us with broken brain. Yes, now, as you're speaking Mary Jo, I would submit that most of us have some brokenness in the brain, meaning some scars and things. And what you're speaking about, of course, is a very systemic way of brokenness with bipolar. Learn that's a very specific type. I think your stories is relevant for all of us, because we could all whatever the brokenness is, right? So, so besides the the medication and the shock treatment, how do you you already talked



about this a little bit more earlier. How do you work with what comes up in your mind, and how do you keep yourself inspired? Because that's one of the things I'm so struck by. I know that, no, I want to be like you, basically, is what I'm sensing like. How does she do it? How do you do it?

Mary Jo West 20:39

Yeah, well, I have a mantra, when that darkness comes back and it does my medica, I have a fabulous psychiatrist, and every few years, the medication that I what, what I'm on, poops out. And when it does, this is what I tell myself. It's the illness talking. It's the illness talking. Yes, you're older, yes, you need to lose weight, yes, all of this. Maybe you're not as smart as as you want to be, but right now and that loneliness you're feeling, it's the illness talking. Let's go get it right. And I do. I don't, you know, wallow in it. I don't. I just, I just keep telling myself. And then, as I said, I have just little brain tricks that I push out of my brain and move on to other things. I also, thanks to you, hylka, again, that word connectedness. I find myself when I have those relapses, we go back and start isolating. And if I start isolating myself, I know I'm in trouble. Or if my car's a mess, or my apartment's a mess. I know that I'm that, as Churchill called his depression, that black dog. I know that little black dog is nipping at my heels again. So I reach out, and I have a I have a cadre of friends that know me, and I can't, I can't fake it with them, and I reach out to them and I say, well, the black dog's back, but next week, I'm going back to Doctor Rosengarten, and we're getting some new medication. You just can't stay in it. You can't let it win.

Hylke Faber 22:14

You make it sound so easy, it's not. No, no, no, no, no, no.

Mary Jo West 22:20

You know, like, right now I'm worried, okay, I know I have a double chin, but are the three chins showing, you know, those kinds of things, especially as women in the media, we, you know, people are so mean about things like that. But now I use the humor and I laugh it off, as I just did earlier. You know, it's, it's called getting older and, yeah, so I think another thing, and you know this hylke, more than anyone, humor is so healing. It's just so healing having that sense of humor. In fact, when I go out and give my speeches around the country, I use the word, I take the word success, and I take each letter in success and give it a meaning. Well, the first S in success a sense of humor, and I tell stories about all the times. I use that in my media career, of how to get through those horrible times by laughing in myself.

Hylke Faber 23:12

I I love that. I love that. So you have seen so many people. You've seen so many parts of our world.

Mary Jo West 23:24

Yes, yes.

Hylke Faber 23:25



You felt so much. You feel so much, and you're so open. So when you're sitting here today, right? What is it that all that experience, if you were to just boil it down, what is all that experience? What has all that experience taught you? What is what is it coming like even? What? What does it come down to?

Mary Jo West 23:54

Kindness? Kindness. Sometimes I get overwhelmed because, as you mentioned in the intro, there are a group of orphans in a remote village in Kenya that I love dearly, and I so desperately want to save them, and I can't. And then I've seen I was in Haiti after the earthquake, and now it's gotten worse. I've seen all this worldwide, and I have realized that I would drive myself crazy if I think I have to save everyone. So what I do is I use kindness everywhere I go, like right now. I retired a few years ago, but I have a part time job at Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix. I'm behind the information counters and people, when they go in an airport, they they forget how to read and listen. There, they get really cranky and mean, and so I'm behind the information desk, and I use kindness with those people. I use kindness when I go through the drive thrus. Can you tell I can't cook and live in Drive thrus to the person who's ordering that I'm ordering with or giving me? Change. I asked them their name everywhere I go. You know, as you mentioned earlier, that sweet little song bright in the corner where you are. Can you imagine if everyone did that in this world, what a greater world it would be? And it comes so natural to me only because I grew up in the South, and while the South had many, many, many, many, many problems. The southern hospitality is real, and I, I it just comes natural, and sometimes even my daughter, God bless her. I love her. She used to roll her eyes when we go through the driving Mom, please don't ask him their name. So I it gets back, what I've learned is kindness and trying to when someone's mean to me at the airport, there are times I've messed up badly. I have not been kind because I I let them win, but most of the time, I just take a deep breath and give them a big smile and say, I can tell you're having a bad day and

Hylke Faber 26:04

kindness. So how do you extend kindness when you're faced with behavior around you that could be seen as unacceptable, like I'm thinking about your co host way back in the 70s, who was saying these really outrageous things to you, like, how do you extend kindness? Then? What is it? Or what does kindness mean for you in those in those circumstances? And as you think about that, I just have to say, I'm, I'm a frequent visitor of Sky Harbor, I'm going to look for you there too.

Mary Jo West 26:43

Yes you are. Yes you are. I think it's just stopping and instead of spurting things out right away, as as you know, you and I, before this broadcast, we had that lovely moment of meditation, I think it's allowing yourself to just stop and taking about 10 seconds to breathe and to think positive and find again, don't want to be too religious. But when I look at people who are having a bad day, I try to find the Christ in them, or if you're not in that religion, you try to find the humanity in them and the good in them, and imagine them smiling, and imagine them having a good day. And I do that a lot, because I know that that's not really that person at that moment. They're just having a bad day.



Hylke Faber 27:34

They're just having a bad day. Yes, yes, yes. You

Mary Jo West 27:37

see them who they are. That's not who they are, right?

Hylke Faber 27:41

That's not who they are, like you. You take the reactivity out of it, pausing for 10 seconds, allowing yourself I'm relating to what you're saying, yes, because the

Mary Jo West 27:54

ball is in my court, and I can scream back, and I'm good at that, but I won't allow it anymore. And I think also, if you have the illness of clinical depression and it's not treated, there is amazing rage inside of you. And so thank God I'm on medication. I know I'm kind of changing gears here, but I to this day, for years, meet one on one with people who have the illness, or the spouse of someone who has the illness, or the parents, and try to convince them don't turn off the choice of taking medication. You know, so many people, no, I'm not going to take it, but we take into society medication for diabetes, for cancer. It's it's not the end of the world to take medication or other kinds of treatments for a broken brain, and sometimes that broken brain will cause you to have those outbursts. So that's why it's very important, and that's why I'm so blessed. In fact, I know that after Prozac was put out on the market. A few years later, it went through some bad press. Well, it saved my life, so much so that I flew to Indianapolis and went to Eli Lilly headquarters and found the Doctor Who Who invented Prozac, and I went to his office, and I took to him a little Lifesaver machine with little life savers in them, and put my daughter's picture on that Lifesaver machine and gave it to him and thanked him for what he did, because he gave me my life back, and I could be a great mother, hopefully, or try to be a great mother. For at that time, my four year old. Well, a year later, he won the top prize in the world for for what he did. And he sent me a picture of that big, big trophy he had, but next to it was that Lifesaver machine. And he said, Guess which one means the most. So I will always be grateful to. That man and to the companies. Now, drug companies get terrible, terrible dress, and some of it is deserved, but don't close that door. And but there's also obviously other things you need to do if you are finding yourself in a dark place. The obvious exercise, reaching out, that connectedness we talked about, getting enough sleep. And as I said off the top of this, this, I almost said newscast, no, is a complete sentence. Don't get your plate overloaded. It's so easy to happen you can't take care of everyone.

Hylke Faber 30:35

Yeah, yeah. I hear in in your sharing, your like words ripen in people, and there's a resonance in what you're saying that i i Just bow to in terms of how you speak about kindness. We're going to take a short break, and we're going to, after the break, continue this conversation about committing to kindness, and how do we develop this orientation towards kindness without us becoming pushovers or getting lost in it? So we're going to look at that. I'm so enjoying this conversation with with Mary Jo West, who brings so much to us. Sees a fierce advocate, from my perspective, for the heart, for brightness in every



corner, she was the first lady of TV news in Phoenix. You can now also find her at Sky Harbor Airport, apparently, volunteering, bringing this kindness there. And Mary mother, Teresa and Oprah Winfrey and lots of other people were somewhere in between on this journey towards becoming a beacon of kindness. Thank you so much for being with us if you're listening. And thank you. Mary Jo West, we're going to take a short break and see you after the break.

32:01

You are listening to rooted and unwavering presented by growth Leaders Network, the leadership team and culture development company. If you would like to learn more about working on connectedness for yourself, your team or organization, please contact growth leaders network on LinkedIn. And now back to the show.

Hylke Faber 32:27

Mary Jo West, I'm going to give you a new name, Mary Jo kindness West. We've been talking. It's amazing to have this conversation. So tell us about how have you this developed this orientation of kindness in yourself? How did that find its root? You talked about your ancestors already in the southern part of it. How did it take root in Mary Jo and how has it been developing itself?

Mary Jo West 32:57

You know, hylka, you you asked the the greatest questions you were so good at this, um, I've never asked myself that where, where did it come from? Well, you know, a Bible verse jumps out at me that I remember learning when I was, like, three years old, be kind one to another, tender hearted and forgiving. I mean, that was one of the first things I ever learned as a child to be kind. I also, in all honesty, I'm very, very sensitive, and when people yell at me, I don't handle it very well. But while something you just said sparked something in me, yes, we want to be kind, and I try to do it 99% of the time, but we also don't want to be run over by people. We don't want to be abused by people, and we do need to stand up for ourselves, but you can do it in a way that can be quite kind. You can say, like, one of the things I do at the airport, when someone really loses it, I say, I've only used it twice. I just say, you know, right now I can see that you're upset, but the way that you are speaking to me makes me more upset, and I'm here to try to help you. So please, if you could just tone down, you know, the negativity right now so that we can work together. But getting back to where all of that came from, it came from my my grandparents. It came from my great grandparents who were still alive. My great grandmother, rather my mother, was the sweetest woman in the world, and I learned that from her as well.

Hylke Faber 34:41

And how have you then developed it? Have you ever almost lost it?

Mary Jo West 34:49

Oh, I lost it. Yeah, I'm I should have been fired. My I've been now the airport for five years. But two years into that, there was a man. There was a lot. Lying at my counter, and there is a man who thought



he had the right to come up and jump in line in front of everyone, and he asked me a question, and I just said, Sir, I want to help you, but you know these other people are here first. Well, he wouldn't go away, and he kept screaming at me, and he kept screaming for profanities everything in the world. So I just lost it, and I said a terrible thing to him using the worst word you can think, and told him to blank off. Well, the people in line started applauding. Now that was wrong of me. I was horrible. So I did lose it on that day, but 99% of the time I don't lose it, so I don't want to come off as a saint, but on that day, I lost it and and so, so much so that after the line went, you know, down and I had a moment, I ran out and I found that man, he was out on the curb At that time, and I apologize to him, but at that moment, I lost it.

Hylke Faber 36:07

How did you know to apologize?

Mary Jo West 36:14

It was just the way that I've I've been brought up that when you make a mistake, you own it. You know, all those years on the news, it was very important, if we made a mistake, fact, error, or whatever, we correct that at the very next newscast or by the end of the newscast. I'm very big into apologies, because I think it can be get closer to things. It can take away great darkness, especially from yourself. I'm a big believer in apologies when you know you've messed

Hylke Faber 36:45

up. Can we talk about a little bit more and get such an important part of kindness right? Sure, and staying rooted like can? Can you tell us about that? Can you tell us about an experience where maybe you made an event or somebody made an amend to you. And what do you think is more important, making the event or having somebody made the event to you? They're

Mary Jo West 37:08

equally as important. They're equally as important. I have a former husband, and I really, really hurt him, and I, you know, years later, saw him in person and asked his forgiveness for being a workaholic and the mistakes that I made in our marriage. And do you know that to this day, we are now best friends, and we care for each other deeply, and we care for our each other's grandchildren, and it's the thing to do. And you know it, it harkens back to to the AA, you know, the laws that I'm I'm not an addict, but the laws of AA, where, you know, making amends is very, very important part of that program. It's very healing. Now keep in mind, someone may not want to hear that apology, but at least you tried, and that's what matters,

Hylke Faber 38:08

and what does that do inside of you when you do that?

Mary Jo West 38:12

Oh my gosh. It frees you up. It frees you up. It gives you closure. You did the best you could, you made a mistake, you apologized, and you, must, must, must, must, move on.



Hylke Faber 38:27

Talk about that moving on part.

Mary Jo West 38:30

Oh, that moving on part is everything, because once you make that apology and all that energy you've been spending, at least in my case of feeling guilty, of beating myself up, how did I hurt that sweet person so much who helped me? It frees you up to have more energy and to go out into the world and continue your life and do more. I'm 75 and I'm just not even close to doing some things I will still want to do. You know, my passion project in Africa, I'm thinking of contacting someone who is involved with the UN and seeing if I can do some things in that regard. Yes, I know that there is age discrimination, and I understand that, but we can't give up because of those two numbers that are next to our name.

Hylke Faber 39:22

I feel this forward momentum in you. So tell us a little bit about how do you cultivate that forward momentum? Because every time I meet with you, Mary Jo, I am just amazed like because you know, here you are working, I think early hours at Sky Harbor. If I'm not,

Mary Jo West 39:44

I get up at 330 in the morning. Can you believe just three days a week? Just three days a week? Uh huh,

Hylke Faber 39:51

yes. And there you are working three days a week. Well, good three days a week, and you're serving in all these different capacities. Yeah.

Mary Jo West 40:01

And the question is, how do I do it? Where

Hylke Faber 40:04

does the energy? Yeah,

Mary Jo West 40:09

well, that energy comes from love. That's what love does. It gives us brand new energy every day. And if we don't get rid of the hate inside of us, that's what zaps us, that's what makes us tired, is the hate and the anxiety, but that love is so freeing. It's so freeing. You know, I had these three grandchildren, I we won't even go there, because I'll bore you to tears. I mean, it is so inspiring, and I want to stay alive and healthy for them, and teach them the few things that I know it's and here we are in Arizona, one of the most beautiful states in the world and in the country, rather, and we need to go outside and get some of that energy back from that. Yeah. I I just, you know, when people ask me, how, how are you today? I have the same answer that I've been giving for 10 years. Usually, people go, how you



doing? And people go, Well, unwell, or whatever. I always say the same thing. I say blessed. And it catches people off guard and into the airport. People say, Blessed. I really like that. Can I steal that we are blessed? We could listen this news. I mean, we could just totally just stick our heads in the sand and be buried by the negativity and the hate and the horrors that are going on in our world today. Or we can definitely try, as we said earlier, brighten the corner where we are, or move around, if we want to, and brighten like the the children in Africa, they know that they are loved. They know that they're not invisible. They know that this little church in a place called Phoenix Arizona cares about them again. Can you imagine if everyone in the world had a passion project like that? Wouldn't that be great?

Hylke Faber 42:03

I I can see it sparkling. I love it. Love it. The power of we hear it so often, and the way you speak about it is so clear, like a clarion call, oh, I'm here. Yes, thank you. Right? It's like a clear, clear, and call like I am blessed to being loving and that gives energy, and what saps it, or what zaps it also, I think it's almost the same. Thing is, is this, this hate, in this, in the anxiety that get in the way? Yes, yes, yes.

Mary Jo West 42:38

I'm terrified because of the election that's coming up in our country, in the United States, because I'm sure people are watching from around the world, and we have to be very, very careful this time around to not let this again permeate us with with hate, with darkness, to divide us from our our dear friends or family, because We have a difference in opinion, so I am really concentrating on doing whatever I can. Haven't figured it out yet, but working on it, on how to make this next election. You know, I had a Oh, dear friend, just send me the meanest Facebook thing message, and I wanted to reply, of course, back with hate, but all I did was I just said, and Happy Easter to you too, and that was hard, but it was all about politics, and he was furious at something our president did on Easter Day, and we just it's how we respond back. And I also said I love you, and if we could all try to do that a lot more, especially in the next next few months, or Forever, forever, forever. Yes, forever, yeah, yeah, forever.

Hylke Faber 43:55

Now my mind goes to, I'll tell you a quick story, and then I love to hear your perspective. No, I love, I love what you're saying. One of the places that we love to visit is Monument Valley. Oh, one of the Navajo women there told me that rain and snow have been declining rapidly over the last 10 years. And my heart went like, Ah, this hurts. And my anxiety went up, I can tell you that. And then I found myself against like, well, you know, what's my place, really? Because my little boy's dream is that, no, together, we're able to set this right. You know, we were able to. I had an idea when I was a little child that in our generation, we would see world peace for all. I think it was 6 billion of us at the time. I didn't know how many people that were back then, right? And in my lifetime, I'm 52 it seems to have not gotten much in that direction. You know? It seems to i. It, yeah, it seems to a lot of things are darkening while a lot of things are brightening too. So I'm curious, you know, you just share with us your numbers, you know, for where you are in your life.

45:17



How do you

Hylke Faber 45:18

how do you keep giving love in a world where darkness seems to be intensifying sometimes or maybe for for a while. How do you do that?

Mary Jo West 45:33

Because I look at what the options are, the options are death or I only have a limited days left in my life. I'm 75 and at most, at most, maybe 1520, years. And I just refuse, refuse to give into it. I just can't. And I have such the right word, so much energy to put that light back on me, to put that you call them the light bearers. Earlier on when we were talking, I want to continue to be a light bearer, and I wanted to get brighter and brighter until the day I die, and I am not going to give up, but if I drown myself by staying too long every day on Facebook or reading the news, I only watch about a 10th of the news that I used to watch. And I'm not blaming the media. I am not blaming the media. I mean, yes, it's changed, and it's totally different when I was doing it, because when I did it, we had make sure that each side was equally represented. We were never allowed, ever to let people know how we felt. I know when I interviewed Walter Cronkite, he was so proud of the end of his time, the famous Walter Cronkite, that no one knew if he was a Republican or a Democrat, but getting back to what I was saying, I limit myself to that darkness that I feed myself that's out there. It doesn't mean that I'm putting a blind eye on it, or again, sticking my head in the sand, but I am choosing priority wise what I can do, what I can do, and that's how I do it every day.

Hylke Faber 47:25

So inspiring, so inspiring. So what would you say to somebody who, for whatever reason, feels in this moment somewhat or maybe very disconnected from that love, from that inspiration, from that energy that you embody,

Mary Jo West 47:44

Get up, take a shower or a long bath, put some nice, fresh clothes on. Don't have to be fancy, and go out and volunteer. I have spent countless years volunteering in homeless shelters. I've seen the poor around the world. And when you go out of yourself, of your apartment or your house, and you get out among people, it's it feeds you. It feeds you. You're feeding them in your own way. But no, you're the one who wins. You are the one who who was blessed? And that would be my advice right now. So go online or whatever, get on your newspaper or whatever you do, whoever you're watching and find out who needs you. There are going to be 1000s of organizations, or hundreds or dozens, wherever you live, who need you. And when you go out and volunteer, go back that second time. It may not go well that first time. Keep going back. And then you establish your family, your own little family at that non profit. I see it happen all the time. I really do

Hylke Faber 48:57

get up, take care of yourself. Get up and go out and volunteer, go out and volunteer.



Mary Jo West 49:03

Oh, so many choices of where you can go out. Try another one there. There are hundreds, 1000s. You are so needed, and you have so much to offer with your own life experience, you are so unique. There's no one like you. There's no one can bring to that child who is hungry, or that that migrant, who, who who needs some, frankly, someone to smile at at them in my home. I do that at the airport. You know, the immigrants that are coming through at the airport, there are many more, and I know that's controversial, but when they are in front of me, that family. I give them my best, I give them my love. And they're terrified, and they don't speak the language, but they know that when they come up to where I am, they are going to be cared for and loved on. I just try to love on as many people as I can.

Hylke Faber 49:59

It's. Yes, it seems like you have your daily love practices well done and well down. I go ahead. Well, there's

Mary Jo West 50:10

something I want to share that a story, if you don't mind. Hylka that, yeah, after becoming a workaholic and doing local news and network news and coming back to Phoenix to make a long story short, my contract was not renewed, and I was replaced in my mind, with a much younger and prettier woman. And so I had a pity party for about three months. I sat on my living room floor and ate, you know, dip and chips and and and then finally got out of that and went to St Vincent de Paul, where the homeless are, and helped. But the here's the story. I also during that time found out I could never have children, and my husband and I decided that we were going to adopt a child, and he is specifically one in a Hispanic little girl. Fast forward a couple of months, and two dear friends of mine who were priests, they said, Mother Teresa is coming to Gallup, New Mexico, and we have an exclusive interview with her, and we want you to go with us, since you're a pro Well, I did, and on the plane with Mother Teresa, before it landed in Gallup. I asked these words to Mother, Mother, do you ever allow Americans to adopt children from her orphanages in India? And she said, Oh, no, you Americans, you kill your babies. Nope. But then she turned around, took my hand and said, Mary, Jo, because you love the poor so much. And the Virgin Mary, I'm going to give you a baby. Well, that baby came from her little orphanage in Honduras, and that baby today is now 36 years old, living 20 minutes from me, my daughter Molly, with her wonderful husband and three grandchildren. So the bottom line is out of getting fired from that channel and thinking my life was over came the greatest gift of all from Mother Teresa, and now, all these years later, when I see the man who fired me, we hug each other and he says, How's Molly? And I say, how are you? I love you. So out of great crises can come amazing opportunities. So I really wanted to share that story to let you know that what you think is the end of the world isn't necessarily so.

Hylke Faber 52:34

What you think is the end of the world isn't necessarily so. And as I fill that out a little bit in my brain, in my heart, it's like because love keeps moving, keeps flowing, and you keep seeing things and and as I



see you, you didn't stay in your on your on your living room floor. No, you you listened and you got yourself up and you got on that plane. Otherwise you wouldn't have had that conversation with mother. Teresa. Yeah. Oh, Mary. Jo, so much. So much. So what? What do you want to say as we're getting towards our closing minutes together in this show? What do you want to say to the people in the world, as as we're as you're thinking about where people are these days, what we're watching on the news, and so much what we're watching in the news is is not giving hope. It's about things that are not going well. What do you want to say to them?

Mary Jo West 53:42

I quit complaining. Look at what you have. Look at those blessings we talked about earlier when I went to Africa seven years ago, to northern Kenya and stumbled upon those orphans. I looked at what they didn't have, but they also, despite all they only ate eat once a day. There were no toys, there are no sheets on their horrible metal beds. There was a joy to them that I wanted to have. They still danced and they still sang. And when I came back to America, I sold a big condo that I had, and I gave away three quarters of my possessions, and I moved into a one bedroom apartment. Here it is, right here. I've been here now. Let me straighten up again. I've been here now six years, and we have got to stop realizing, start realizing what we have. We have a roof. You have a roof over your head. I bet you had breakfast or lunch or dinner. Today, we have so many blessings and so many things that we can share with others. That's what I would say. Quit complaining. I mean, I go to work and. Sometimes I wouldn't, I don't, but I wouldn't strangle somebody who just can't stop you know what? Bitching? Stop it. Stop it. And that's what I would like to say to all of us. We are so blessed. We are alive, and while we have breath, I don't care how disabled we may be. While we have breath, we can keep giving, and that's what keeps us alive.

Hylke Faber 55:33

While we have breath, we can keep giving, and that's what keeps us alive. I've taken so much from this conversation. It's been a bath in unconditional love and giving and getting ourselves up and being clear about what's going on, not being afraid to shed light on the dark places, and yet not staying there and and being able to extend that deep heart based kindness. And what I hear from your life story is also without attachment. I see you selflessly giving there, for example, at the at the airport, right? You're not getting Emmy awards from the passengers who are standing in line there. Yeah. So maybe one closing thought. What's a closing thought? What would you like to say by way of closing our conversation today?

Mary Jo West 56:33

Well, you may not like this, hylke, because you're such a man of humility, but hylka, you know, I'm on the board of directors of a nonprofit that you're involved with, and we brought you in to help us overcome some issues that we were having. And I just sat there in amazement at the gift you've been given on reconciliation, on bringing people together and that connectedness. And you are a gift to us, and I just want to thank you.



Hylke Faber 57:08

Thank you for seeing me. Thank you for seeing me. Thank you for seeing me. And if you're watching and if you're listening, maybe take a moment to appreciate the gift that you are see. That's one of my other nicknames for Mary. Jo is the the the recognizer of gifts and the person that keeps giving. And to me, that's what this program has been about today. It's really about recognizing our gifts and taking away those parts that get in the way of it not being deterred by the things that keep us bottled up. And the bottling up is the discomfort that is the tired, the the life is the love and the things that we can give day to day. So thank you so much, Mary Jo, for being with us today. Yes, and for everyone listening, appreciate you being in this space together, I invite you to maybe reflect a little bit about what would it like look like today to be just a little kinder and a little bit more giving today to yourself and to the people around you. What would that be like? And that concludes our episode today of root and unwavering. If you like these conversations, you can always tune in to us at Apple Spotify and other places that we listen to podcasts and also on LinkedIn, and then we will see you again in a next episode, the next show of rooted and wavering, where we keep looking at this question together, how do we stay rooted and share that with others to what's most important to us? Thank you so much for listening. This is root and wavering, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host. Joko Faber, see you next time.

Diana Belluomini 59:12

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