

Hello, friend. I'm sorry I'm a couple days late here, with this first episode. I guess, maybe we call it an episode. Or just recording, time to hang out together for a little bit. This week was eventful, but then it ends in a non eventful way. And that actually, I ended up getting a COVID test done for the first time on Thursday. And I think that all the thoughts around waiting for the results and what would happen if it was negative and what would happen if it was positive, just took over. And I lost just track of time and didn't realize that it was really Friday, and then Friday was the day I'd promised to do something. But I like the idea of sending it on a Sunday, just this first one. I'll stick to Fridays after this, but it was yeah, it's quite a week. I will say that, obviously the ... or maybe not obviously, but the test came back negative, which is great.

And actually I wasn't overly worried that I had it. But I did have a couple of mild symptoms this week. And I have plans, which fortunately I now get to do. I had plans to go away for two weeks, not anywhere far but to a couple of smaller communities within BC. And I just did not like the idea that I would go somewhere without getting checked out. I didn't want to risk bringing something just because I assumed I was probably fine. And it's nice to know that the answer was true that I was fine, and I was negative. But just for my peace of mind with travel, that felt really important to get checked out. So which leads me here, which I am actually right now sitting on the deck of a friend's house on the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia. So it takes about seven hours or it took about seven hours for me to get here from home. And I'm going to spend a week here and then I'm going to spend a week in Squamish.

Which is where I used to live and definitely considered to be somewhat of a second home. I'm really excited to be able to go back, I haven't been there since the pandemic. So yeah, today was a long day, but I feel so nice to just be sitting here. I just feel very, very blessed, very grateful. The friend that I'm staying with she has an ocean view. It is about eight o'clock, I'm watching the sun go down. So when I look across, I can see the ocean. And then I can see layers of mountains. And I can see the colors of the sky. So clearly I love how this happens at sunset, where you can see that it's red, pinky red, right towards the horizon. And then it slowly goes up to orange, yellow, green and blue. It's really nice, actually let me take a picture of this. And just be able to share that with you after. But yeah, it's really nice to be here. For the first episode of this, I thought actually first of all that I would go through a couple of questions that people had sent me.

Gosh, this would have been back in March. No, April, maybe. I was doing this challenge on Instagram that was supposed to be for 100 days, I did 50 days which felt really good. I was doing this challenge where I was drawing something every day and writing something to go along with it, and sharing that on Instagram and partway through I got a little bored with writing. I guess what we're memories from my trips or things that I've done. And I was like, it'd be really nice to maybe answer some questions, maybe show up a bit in that way. Maybe I can be helpful or share some personal stuff. And I got through, maybe only a dozen or so. I mean, I think altogether, there are about 60 questions. I'm not going to answer 60 questions right now. But I did write down just a couple for today. One that came up over and over in varying forms was in general, the question of how are you? I got how are you? How are you doing? How are you doing with pandemic? How are you today? How is your heart? How are you really?

And I just want to say first that it actually felt really nice to get those questions. There was something about them that wasn't, it wasn't asking anything of me. Feels like just an invitation to share instead and that felt really nice. So in case anyone who did ask that is listening to this, thank you for that. Because it was really nice to see that question come up multiple times. So right now I can say, how are you? I'm happy that I don't have COVID, I'm feeling pretty grounded these days. That was not true early in the pandemic. And then it wasn't true, maybe a month ago, three weeks ago. Actually I saw this funny thing, not really funny because it's true. But it was drawn out as a meme to make it funnier. Describing the emotions that we're going through during the pandemic as a Corona coaster. And I really just resonated

for me, I feel like my ups and downs lasts for longer. My up is more just grounded or feeling stable, that lasts for a fairly good chunk of time.

But then it definitely dips down. So I think it there haven't been a lot of highs per se, it's been grounded or dipped. And it feels nice when you're grounded though, it's actually nice that there's no drastic pies. But I would say right now it's great now I'm grounded. A few weeks ago, less grounded, I was going through just the feelings of this isn't what I want, this I want to be traveling, I want to be in Europe where I was supposed to be. I want to be doing this, I want to be doing that. I want to be more free and just I think those are thoughts that a lot of people are experiencing at different times throw this, in some ways I think mine was, I felt delayed. I talked myself down in the beginning and I was just, nope, I have to settle into this for the long term. I need to come up with a plan, I just need to settle in, I just need to do this. And that worked for a while.

And then it didn't, and that's okay. But right now I'm feeling pretty grounded. It feels really nice feel to take a little bit of time off right now, before what will I'm sure be a few months of fairly busy work, busier times for me, promotion periods around books. There's a lot, you have to be on a lot more than I am in regular life. Or just talking to more people more social. And communicating a lot more, a lot more emails a lot more of just everything and it's nice to have a little bit of time off before jumping into that. And that's actually a lesson I learned, and then now gifting to myself before this next book comes out. Because the way that the things happened with the first book compared to this one are so different. With the first book I didn't know what to expect, and I just had such anxiety pretty much the whole thing. In the months leading up to it, I was incredibly anxious. My friends can vouch, actually the friend I'm staying with can vouch because we both used to live in Squamish together.

I think my insomnia was at the point where I was waking up around 3:30 in the morning, every single day for weeks. I was so stressed, I didn't think I was allowed to say no to anything. So I just said yes to everything. But I was incredibly burned out by the end of it. And that's a thing I don't want to repeat. My mental health took a massive dive at the end of all of that. And I don't want to repeat that, both for myself and just family and friends. I don't want to be back in that space. But also, for my work and for how I show up. I look at that burnout period, I mean, it led to a lot of really important work. And it's therapy and even more self reflection and a lot of really important stuff came out of it, but I just don't want to ever deal with the exhaustion, the self doubt, all the things that came along with it.

Because it all affected how I showed up. It affected the way I did my work, it affected how I showed up online and I just think that there's a healthy, healthier way to do it. So [that's 00:10:41] what I'm hoping to do, is go around. So this is my ... excuse me, this is my one week of vacation. Where actually after I send this off to you, I'm going to unplug for a few days entirely and we're going to hike and swim in the lake and maybe get a pedal board. And just read books, and I say all that read books. I'll probably read like 100 pages of a book. And it'll be really nice, I'm really looking forward to it. So I'm all of those things. And thank you for asking. I got another question that said, what have you been up to since your first book came out? You've been really quiet online. And that second part is partially true. Partially. So my first book came out in January of 2018. And I basically started doing interviews in the November before that, so November 2017.

And I did interviews straight through to the end of April of 2018. About six months of pretty full on work, after that and during that I saved up for the first time for me to go on a trip to Europe. Which is something I had never been there before. And I don't know if you know this, but I actually haven't been to that many places. And I say that in comparison to I don't know if you follow travel bloggers, or even if it just might look sometimes online I'm all over the place, I actually go to the same places a lot. So I go around BC to a few towns a lot. And I, back in the day I used to travel to Toronto for work or some other places like around North America for conferences and things like that. But in some ways, I actually

haven't been into that many places, I had never left the continent actually. I'd never left North America before.

So I booked that trip and it was my prize and also my marker for when I would stop working for a little bit. When I would cut off being fully available, the way that I had been. So yeah, I went to the UK and Ireland in May of 2018. And I ended up loving that trip so much, that I thought I would like to do a lot more of that. I would like to spend a lot more time in Europe. You'll read about some of this actually in the book, but I went on to spend a lot of time in the UK in 2019. And also just I haven't really had a home since then, or a home of my own. So if you ask what I've been up to, I essentially gave up my apartment in Squamish. And I made this arrangement with my dad that I would hang out with him for a couple months of the year, maybe around the holidays, and then I would travel for the rest of the year.

And so what I can share about 2020 is that, where things are so different now is that I'm hanging out at my dad's house, for the pandemic. This is the first time I've left it, he is coming on this trip. So I mean, those are some of the biggest things I've been up to. I guess, the online question of it though, is the online aspect of how I've been quiet online is an interesting one. I did decide to stop blogging after the book came out. And that was, it wasn't an easy decision to make. But at the same time it was. Yeah, I've obviously done a lot of reflecting on this for where I'm at with it right now because more and more time has passed is that I stopped blogging because I just felt I had said everything I wanted to say at that time. That wasn't the plan. That was not the plan. And I definitely had all kinds of concerns, or work related concerns of if I stopped blogging would people stop being interested in what I had to say? Would people not buy my book? Would people not buy a second book?

All these, yeah, all kinds of questions of what would people think in general? And this is something I'm probably going to be working on forever, is that I can't just make decisions based on what people think, or what they might think. And ultimately with the blog, and I said, it wasn't the plan. But I think what I realized after doing all of those interviews was that the book was like this ... Or the first book was like this summed up version of everything I had been saying with a lot more detail than I had ever shared on the blog anyways. But that chapter just felt complete. I just felt like that was it for now. That was all I had to say for now. So, yeah, so I guess that's just to say I haven't shared as much personal stuff online. So I'm just shifting here I'm going to try and move my phone and not make a super loud annoying noise.

Yeah, I haven't been sharing as much personal stuff online is probably the biggest thing. And part of that is because I haven't been doing as many so called challenges as I used to do. So much of what I wrote back then was paying off my debt, doing the shopping ban. I did a year of slow living experiments, there were all these different challenges. And that was the majority of what I was writing about anyways, and I haven't been doing those. But I think the other reason is that, or the other reason I have not been sharing as much is because a lot of the work that I'm doing right now privately, on the side of things is in therapy and it's the stuff that just isn't for mass consumption. I think that I'm sure in ways they will come out in the future, maybe I'll find ways to share things. I'm learning things that could be really helpful for others. Yeah, I'm sure there will be ways to share some of it in the future. But I think being in it, what I have learned is that I needed and still need much clear boundaries of who I share certain things with.

And sharing the more external, external challenges are things that ... challenges had things you could physically see externally. It made sense to be sharing those, it made sense to share something like paying off debt because I could show you the numbers. It made sense to show you the shopping ban because I can tell you about the progress. Even those so living experiments, I had to share my reflections on what I was learning. What's happening right now? I'm sure over time it has resulted in some external shifts that maybe my friends and family would be able to see in me. But it's like it's deeper work. It's

emotional work. It's healing all things from over the years and even just from this past year. And that stuff's for me. And there's a dirt bike or something going by. Just wait for that.

Yeah, nope. So, yeah, what have I been up to? I've been hanging up my dad's traveling before the pandemic. And yeah, doing a lot of healing work, I guess. A lot of therapy, a lot of ... also just focusing on friendships, deepening friendships. I think having more interesting conversations with people. Really just in our friendships, learning how to really hold space for each other and not try and solve each other's problems, let each other have our experiences but be there in a supportive way rather than no one's trying to fix anybody. No one's trying to think that we can all solve each other's problems. So we have such interesting conversations now in a way that I didn't years ago. And again, I have plans, definitely that one I think I can share it at some point. Because I do have thoughts about doing a podcast. I'm hoping in person.

We don't know, none of us know what when or what that's going to look like but that is a hope. So I hope that I can share more of that stuff in the future. I also got a question about do I spend much time in self reflection? They added saying your life has changed a lot over the past few years. Do you ever take stock of it all and just a look at how far, or not how far you've come but how much has changed? I mean, I think the short answer that I'm sure many of you wouldn't be surprised by is that the answer to that is yes. I do a lot of self reflection. And what this looks like is I've really learned to stay with my feelings, to let myself be uncomfortable, to notice when I'm uncomfortable and then to start asking myself where that feeling is coming from. And what I want to do. And learning just how to really slow down with it not doing anything impulsively.

But yeah, constantly reflecting on those things, and it makes it so that I am fairly slow to make decisions. Not that I'm not spontaneous, not in that sense, more like bigger decisions, I guess of work things or where I want to travel to next or things like that. I'm not very impulsive about that stuff. But that is all part of my process, I guess, for reflecting. Because what it might look like on the outside is that I just make these huge decisions and just go for it. But in actuality, I've been probably self reflecting on it for months before the day comes that I actually then make the decision that looks really big. But that's taken me months and months to reflect on, and decide to go for. So yeah, short answer, yes. And do I look back and just take stock? Yes. It would be hard not to, I think, for sure turning ... I turned 35 this summer.

I was 25 when I started my blog, and when I was maxed out with \$30,000 of consumer debt. And I was so stressed about money that I couldn't sleep at night, I would cry myself to sleep at night. And so even that alone, just say that 10 years later to be in a position where I don't have the money where I never have to worry about how to make money. But to be in a position where I don't have to worry about how I'm going to say pay my rent. That's huge. So even just that alone, so yes, yes, yes. No, I did want to share a few things that I have been ... actually, under the realm of self reflection that I have learned since my first book came out. So since, *The Year of Less* came out, I've been taking notes here and there of some of the bigger overall lessons that I've learned. Some are just observations that I have found interesting. Some are more personal. And yeah, I just thought I'd share a few of those with you in this first one.

The first one, I will say that probably came as the biggest surprise to me was that, and I can share a bit of a story on this is that when the book was available for pre order. So you know when it shows up on all the online retailers, Amazon, et cetera. When it showed up for pre orders that it was available, I went and looked at Amazon's listing and noticed that, I don't know if you've ever clicked on this or looked at this. But Amazon will often let you preview a little bit of the book. So there's usually above the cover image, there'll be a little icon that says preview. And I remember clicking on it for *The Year of Less*, and seeing that what they had decided to include, as the preview, which for many other books is 10 to 20

pages. Amazon had included almost a third of the book. Actually, maybe it was more than a third. I remember being like they included the first three chapters almost in full. And I was so panicked by this, because my assumption then was that if people could read most of it for free online, why would anyone buy it?

And the lesson I learned just from a consumer standpoint, which and because I can add on it with my next point is that I don't know that people will use that very often. And I think that mostly because of the second point, which is that ... let me let the seagulls go. The second point is around reviews. Which I made a really, that was the one thing I had pretty good boundaries up around, was not reading reviews. I read a few in the first few days, you see what the first ones are that come out. And after that I really made a very concerted effort to not read them, knowing that it wasn't going to serve me any good. Because if they're negative there's nothing you can do, the book already exists. And if they're positive, that's nice. It's really nice. But it also if you were to just read positive ones, that's not a great thing for your ego. So I just thought, it's just better if I don't know.

And essentially gave it this attitude of the book exists. And that's there's nothing I can do, good or bad. There's nothing I can do with it. So it just exists, I did my job as the writer and wrote something and hopefully some people like it. But what I did notice in the reviews, actually under both good and bad was how many people started them off by saying, this is not what I expected. Both positive and negative. And that made me think going back to the preview, that if people were to read previews ever, maybe that might not be the, a review that they end up leaving. So just from a shopping standpoint, I found that interesting that we probably ... Yeah, I don't know. Just buy books a bit more impulsively. I know I have many times in the past, looks like you ... someone tells you about it or you see it listed on some website or you've seen it a couple times and you think it might look good.

And you just buy it, really having no idea what it's going to be about. And that can be a good and bad thing, good or a bad thing. The piece about reviews that I've been so fascinated by, and what I really had to, or like I learned this from reading some of the negative ones in the beginning. And then I was, Cait, don't do this. But reading some of the negative ones in the beginning. I was able to see really, really clearly if I took a few steps back and tried to take myself out of it, how personal reviews are. And by that, I mean, if you go to read some reviews of books, majority of them are written in a way where people are saying good or bad. Why, what they did or didn't like about it. I guess, that's good or bad. Yeah, anyways, people are sharing though based off of their experiences.

They are sharing biases, beliefs that they have, experiences that we'll never understand, any trauma that people might have, any shame that's been placed on them. And then the opposite too, of more positive things that people might be feeling. But all of these things I've been reading some of the reviews, I was really able to see it's almost people aren't even saying most of the time. Like, oh, the author is bad or anything like that. There's so much, they're just like this didn't work for me. And or this did work for me. And it really comes from a personal and an actually biased place. Bias just based on where we're at in our lives, and why that book did or didn't do something for us. And I'm also sharing that for creatives, for anyone who's working on something. Whether it's a book or a podcast, or just creating content for Instagram or a blog. Some people might not like it, but it really isn't about you.

And if we take everything personally, we'll also never create anything ever again. So that's been really helpful. And actually what it's helped me do since then, is any book that I read, I just started this, this year. Any book that I've read in 2020, when I'm done a review on it on Goodreads. Where all I do is write one quote that I really liked from the book, and that is my review. So it's not about whether it's good or bad. It's just here's a quote that I really liked from this, because if nothing else, I can probably find that. That's been fun. Okay, another topic that has weighed I would say very heavily on me, or did weigh heavily on me in the first let's say, I would say for most of 2019 actually. Part of 2018 but a lot of 2019.

Was I had so many thoughts about all the things I wished I had included in The Year of Less. Everything from I wish I had talked more about the waste aspect of decluttering.

I wish I had talked about what happens when we take our stuff to thrift stores. Things like, I don't know like ... I know that on my blog, I had shared this a few times. And I'm pretty sure in The Year of Less, I shared this in a few sentences. But I find a lot of problems or I find a lot of the ways that minimalism is sold to be very problematic. And it was, yeah, it's stuff that over the past, let's say a year and a half or so. But I've really thought about how much I wish I had included in this stuff. I wish I had included that apparently only 10% of the stuff that we take to thrift stores is actually resold. And the majority of that just ends up in a landfill or it shipped off to developing countries. Which is just really interesting and horrible to think about. But it's also just a reality, not something that we should feel horrible for it. It is the reality of living in the capitalist society that we do, is that we produce and then buy so much stuff that, I mean, has to go somewhere sometime.

All these thoughts that were just running through my head over the past year of I wish I did more of this, I wish I had talked more about that. And the reality is that I've, or where I've come to this place of acceptance is I didn't know some of that stuff while I was writing the book. I wrote the book in 2017. I didn't know some of ... actually and in 2016, as well. So I didn't know some of that. And for that reason it's, I guess, I come into this place of having to accept that a book is a snapshot of a period of time. So it does not encapsulate all of your beliefs, or all of the things the knowledge that you have. And the ways that you live today, they are not wrapped up in a book that you wrote years ago. And that's where it's so different than a blog where you can see the progression and the years, what happens as the years go on. A book isn't like that. So people could read it, I don't know, I think certain things of me or make I assumptions about how I live today or whatever.

And I just have to accept that, that is ... I was, I think 30 and 31 when I was writing that book. Something like that 31, and 31 when I wrote the book. And I just have to accept that, that that book is a snapshot of where I was at when I was 31. And the beautiful thing is that we do get to continue to grow and learn and shift and change, and just evolve. And I'm, it's one of the reasons I'm excited for this next book is because I think that you will have ... you will get a snapshot of what I've been up to more. But I also have some of my shift or my beliefs have shifted. And yeah, and I wrote this book also fully accepting that this is also a snapshot of where I was at this stage of my life. So yeah, actually, I'm going to share this because it's happening in this moment. When I wrote this book I was doing some trauma therapy. It was very unexpected because of something that happened while I was writing this book.

And I actually remember getting to the end of it. And all I could think was, oh, I didn't include this. Or I really wanted to add this line or something about this. And I was so stressed about it. And eventually I just had, actually had to get to this place of I did the best that I could. And I can't ask for more than that of myself. And also, maybe there are ways that I can share some of those other thoughts with you guys. Maybe in this format, maybe in audio. Because there are, I don't know, there are a few things that I wished I had included in this new one. But part of me also thinks that that is true. So many things. Think of how many conversations you get to the end of and you think, oh, I wish I had said this. Maybe this is just one of those things.

I think that's probably good for now. Yeah, there's so many things I could say here. There's directions that I could take this. I've had thoughts on, I could talk to you a bit more about consumption consuming less. Things I've learned around how, I don't know. There're so many different directions I could take this. And actually what would feel really good to me is I think if I instead of making assumptions about what you want to hear, or what would be helpful, I would actually really love to hear from you what would be helpful. Or what you're curious about that I may or may not, it's your thought what you're curious about. Or even just what topics you're interested in right now. Is there anything that's really

interesting to you? What's on your mind? What are the things that you're trying to think about? Gosh, especially at this time when we don't have the ability maybe to be living the way that we want to.

What is on your mind? What are you thinking that you'd like to do when you have a bit more flexibility or when it's a bit safer? Are there any challenges you're thinking of? Are there any ... I don't know. Just things, dreamy things, good things that ... on your mind. Things that you want to be excited about, something you want to look forward to. I'd love to hear any of it. I'm happy also, depending on what comes in. I've said this will be a four part series but also, it's pretty easy for me to sit here and just talk into my phone for half an hour to 45 minutes. So depending on what you guys send in, I'm happy to do more of these.

So I'm going to leave it at that far, for this one. And what I'm going to say is that if you do you have a question, comment, a thought to share, something you'd like me to discuss in another episode of this. Why don't you shoot me an email to caitflanders@gmail.com. I think you know how to spell my name, probably. But it's C-A-I-T. Flanders like "In Flanders Fields", or as I was often teased with in elementary and high school, like Ned Flanders from the Simpsons. So, yeah caitflanders@gmail.com, if you want to send me something. I will work on definitely the next one. But maybe I'll be able to figure out a fun theme for the rest of these. I think that's it for tonight my friends. Thank you for being here with me. Thank you for any background noise that might have come in and not letting it be super disruptive, and just being here. It was really nice. I will talk to you again soon.