

Tamar Christensen LiveWell Interview

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Wendy Slusser, Tamar Christensen

T Tamar Christensen 00:00

This is why our stories are so important because people can not only identify us and see themselves in us, but we can also start to see how rich and diverse the fabric is of our climate crisis. We have so much to gain from listening to each other's stories.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 00:20

Hi everyone, I hope your summer has been off to a great start and you're managing to stay cool and safe given all the extreme weather across the globe. While the heat flooding, tornadoes and climate migration might make us all feel powerless. I'm hoping this podcast episode will empower how even you can help contribute to planetary and social well being. We record a lot of inspiring and perspective shifting conversations on this podcast. So that's why it was created in the first place. But I have to say today's conversation really encouraged me to think about the habits I've set in my life. Our guest is Tamar Christiansen and everything about her story is fascinating. She talks about how as an instructor at UCLA, she guides her students through creative writing to address their eco anxiety, and even inspires them to pursue careers to help address the climate crisis. She talks about her past as a veteran and the present as a composter, a chicken mom and a zero waste lifestyle icon. But a vow she's not an eco martyr. We hear about how she helped address food insecurity for the LA community while reducing food waste through the nonprofit nourish chalet located at UCLA Family Housing. She speaks with humility about her work and lifestyle and understands that her actions come from a specific point of access and privilege. I think understanding these various access points are essential when talking about anyone's personal decisions directed toward mitigating a global and deeply structural climate problem. Long story short, Tamar is an absolute joy to learn from, and wonderful storyteller, which we learn is quite key in bringing about positive change, enjoy. Well, Tamar, we are so super excited to have you on this podcast, for a lot of reasons. One was that I heard you present at our Eatwell pod so magnificently, about one of your many projects that you do and so love to have the listeners and learn a little bit about nourish LA. But before I get there, I want to also have you just comment or talk to me in our listeners about what you do at UCLA, I understand you are a writer lectureship, you focus on environmental advocacy and eco consciousness and lifestyles. So give us a flavor of what that means.

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Tamar Christensen 02:53

Sure, my title is a continuing lecturer and in writing programs, and our program just basically teaches all on the required writing courses. And then some additional courses in the professional writing minor and some graduate courses and things like that writing takes so many forms at the university and outside of the university that we're really given a lot of leeway to decide how we want to manifest that in our classrooms. Most of my classes, whether are teaching, developmental writing, first year writing, even the professional writing minor courses, or my writing two courses in the upper division, whatever level of writing, I'm I'm teaching, I craft my courses around some sort of theme of that is relatable to our climate crisis. So I'm not teaching an environmental science course, I'm teaching students really how to articulate themselves and come up, you know, be a part of a conversation and how to take a seat at the table. In that sense, I'm really teaching them that they get a voice at the university and within this broader scope of our climate crisis through their own analysis. And that's kind of the avenue that that I take with it.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 04:06

Do the students have to choose your course? randomly? Or do they know that that's the focus?

T

Tamar Christensen 04:13

Yeah, we're working on that actually, in writing programs right now is that it is random at the moment. So let's say they are required to take an English Composition three course, which is first year writing at UCLA. And that's part of their GEs like almost all of the my colleagues in my department will teach an English Composition three course. But we all have very different approaches to it.

D

Dr. Wendy Slusser 04:35

Well, that's I actually think it's kind of cool that it is random because you have no idea. You know, you might be opening up the world of environmentalism to people who might not have ever thought of it. And that really gets to the voice of the next generation and what you're hearing when you do have them hand in their papers, what what kind of perspectives that have you read or I found from your students that maybe you might not have ever thought of yourself.

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Tamar Christensen 05:05

I think one thing that kind of keeps coming back over and over, it's the same thing that prompted me to change my curriculum toward a sort of climate crisis spoke of focus, I say, a crisis. But so many of my courses, my students focus on the solutions to our climate crisis. So it's not all kind of gloom and doom, I think the thing that kind of keeps coming up year after year, quarter after quarter is not that they had no idea that it existed, they had no idea that

they were a part of it good or bad. They're learning these massive systems ways of thinking at the university. And they understand that really well. But they walk out of that lecture hall, and they think that they're completely disengaged, they're not disengaged, but like, they're just not a part of that discussion, that these systems are something that don't have any relatability to their everyday lives, their, what they do, how they think, what choices they make, how they talk to people. And so I hear that so frequently, I realized my students were talking about eco anxiety and learning about the climate crisis and and, you know, anthropogenic manmade climate climate change and how their futures are really in a dastardly state, they were they were very concerned, and it was really tossing them into eco anxiety. But without much ability to think about solutions or see solutions or talk about solutions are seeing their place in it, they would quickly sort of revert to sort of apathy, students were getting a lot of knowledge, but not a lot of space to sort of process and engage with material, you know, with the material for climate crisis. And to see their space within that it comes up every single quarter that this class is offering them a space to really unpack some of this very heavy material and engage with it and not come out feeling like they've been hit by a straight steamroller. Wow.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 07:01

Well, so what you're describing is, you're giving them that moment to not only talk about it, or write about it, but they also are reflecting back to their own lives, you get groups of students that are going to be scientists in this field. And you're giving them a sense of empowerment through this writing course, which is tremendous, and also that you're making sure that even scientists know how to write and express themselves. One of the people we recently interviewed is Matt Sinclair, who's the Chief Sustainability Officer for the UC wide sustainability office. And he talked a lot about the student voice is the conscience of the university. Have you seen any change in the course of the some of the students that you maybe you've kept up with or activism on campus or, you know, career paths changed? What can you share with us?

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Tamar Christensen 07:58

I have seen students change their careers, their, you know, desire for a particular career, one of my students told me, my parents were going to be so upset with you, they really wanted me to be a doctor, ah, and she said, but now I want to get my MBA in, in ecological consulting for large corporations, because I know that they're going to need that they need guidance. And they need more than just protests. They need people who are working for them, helping them make better choices. And she went on to Duke Fuqua School of Business finished that and, and she's on her way, already doing that she's quite already quite successful. But I also have had, students just get very involved on campus, I'm, I'm very involved in campus club activities. If I'm ever invited to come talk to somebody in a club, I want to, I want to interact with students on that love bowl when it's non transactional. And I also want to so that I can show them what it's like to do your best to walk the talk, you know, that I try to make those efforts in my own life where I can and, and they can see that it's not just something I'm lecturing on in my upper division course I have students research their future careers. So I have them, interview somebody who's already in that career, and ask all kinds of questions about the live work life balance, as well as what the job really entails, how you get there, how you stay successful, things like that. And so when they do that type of research, I think students then have an awareness of like, of how their activism plays a role, not just in climate change, but also in their own lives. Because in that class day prior to that research assignment, they research a climate

crisis solution, and how they are a part of it and they I asked them to go out and to actually try some of the solutions, and to write about them from the first person, you know, like, I've never had a plant based meal. So I tried to go plant based because I've done this research on greenhouse gas emissions, we have this access at UCLA. So I'm going to try that. Once they do that research on not only the crisis, but the solutions, and they get to research project number two, I have them write that paper as if they're already established in their field. So about, I'd say, about 20 years in the future. And I asked them to bring in the climate crisis, what's happened? How have your solutions panned out? How are they impacting your career, because if you'd told me 10 years ago, that the climate crisis would change my career, I would have laughed heartily so. So they're really starting to connect the dots in this way. And I think when they walk out of that 10 week course, like that, they feel empowered in very tangible ways. And they become, I'm hesitant to use the word activist in the sort of historical term, but they are certainly active agents in their current and future lives.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 11:06

Well, speaking of walk the talk, you certainly do that at two levels, your own personal life, and then also you take action within your community, not only at UCLA, but you really have been very active in the nourish la organization. Give me a little bit of the background. That's an of course, that's how I met you in the first place. You were sharing this information about nourish LA?

T Tamar Christensen 11:30

Yes. I mean, I'll basically talk to anyone who wants to hear about it.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 11:36

I will you know, after your talk, I talked to my daughter who was in between jobs, and she actually volunteered for you on one Sunday. A couple maybe a month ago or so?

T Tamar Christensen 11:47

Oh, well, she will she'll hunt me down and say hello, because they're every, every Sunday unless I unless I'm out of town. You know, I'm nourish la had a documentarian doing a small piece on them. It was a little over a year ago. And when he was questioning me, he said, you know, tamer, I keep hearing people say, this is, this is every Sunday, and he says, But don't you know what it would have felt for those of you who go to church, and he says, Every person I asked that keeps saying this is better than church, do you think this is better than church? And I said, Absolutely. Because even if you're a religious person, I mean, I always felt that, you know, everything I learned in my religion was to do the work, you know, and there's no better way I can imagine spending a Sunday than then doing that, that good work for both the climate and, and people. It did start at the beginning of the pandemic, April 20th, of 2020. And the founder, Natalie Flores, she had noticed that, you know, there was a lot of scarcity in the grocery stores, you couldn't get in, and people were hoarding food. And she noticed on her community boards that a lot of parents, mothers families were saying, like they were out of

things. And they were under a lot of duress, as so many of us were at the beginning. And she happened to work in the restaurant and cafe industry. So she knew a lot of restaurant owners who had all this food they couldn't use because everything was shut down. And she started making phone calls saying, give it away. Don't let it rot give it away. So she started out of her garage, and that grew into one of those restaurant tours, allowing her to use his space because it was defunct, he couldn't use it, nourish la operated for two full years out of that space. And the more Vista area, when things came back nourished, I like kind of lost their lease, so to speak. And they had to find a new home. And I had been volunteering with nourish LA at that point for about eight or nine months. It was sort of like everything I had learned about our climate crisis coming in manifesting itself in in solutions, you know, that if we take care of each other, if we take care of our resources, good things really amazing things can happen. So in every Sunday, you know, I mean, we'd have We have volunteers of all ages been that sort of community building has been remarkable. But then also watching all of this food come in, that was being sequestered from grocery stores and restaurants. That was just perfectly good. Nothing, not a thing wrong with it. And that it was really being recovered in a way that was disrupting that chain that would send it to the landfill but instead getting it to real people. I mean, I keep my I feel like the Grinch. You know, my heart swells like five times too big every time. I think about that, because it's it's how it's how it should be. We should not have people hungry while food is being wasted. When nourish la kind of lost their lease at that location. I actually started calling everybody I knew with whoever I was connected to at UCLA, you know, do you have any ideas? What can I knew there must be space. And I knew that there is a lot of work going on, on campus to combat food insecurity among undergraduate students. And those students while they're on campus. I've done some research at the library, I've been working with librarians, trying my hardest to find research for students who don't live on campus who might be suffering from food insecurity, and especially students with dependents. And so I thought there's got to be a place that UCLA that could help, we could help with this, and it could be a win win. And so I called Bonnie Benson. She's our Deputy Chief Sustainability Officer at UCLA who's a good friend of mine, and she said, I've got the place Hang on. And we that was just Kismet. She put me together with ResLife down in university apartment cells, and where we have students with dependents living, who are not all graduate students, and many people, not not just married families, but students with grandparents and parents who are their dependents. It's an incredibly diverse population. So we started there just we just had our one year anniversary actually over Memorial Day weekend.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 16:10

Yeah, that's very exciting and that's just one of your activities that you do to contribute to sustainability. And also, as you say, building community, which is all part of the mix in terms of creating a healthier planet and and Healthier You, right, you also walk the talk personally, and you don't have a car and you you use public transit or walk and you limit yourself to one flight of a year, as I understand, which is a big carbon footprint, as we all know. So how did that all come about?

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Tamar Christensen 16:49

It didn't happen overnight. And I don't expect anybody to do what I do. I, I, I look at my own intersection of access, what do I have access to? And what are my ability ease with that access, and then I act from that intersection. And that's just going to look so different for everyone. And

it certainly didn't happen overnight. And in fact, I, you know, I think the first time I heard that the terms are a waste, I laughed hysterically for like, 20 minutes. Like, that's just not possible. You can't live like that. And while I was kind of right, you can't. It's not really possible. But efforts are possible. And so it was really spurred by actually my niece, I don't have children of my own. I have 26 nieces and nephews. And

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 17:35

That's plenty!

T Tamar Christensen 17:39

And one of my older nieces posted something on social media. I mean, I can't even remember exactly it was, but it was one of those photographs of you know, a sea turtle with a six pack soda plastic ring around its shell and it was sort of hourglass shaped. It had grown around that. And she just commented something like, you know, thanks a lot. What is What are you doing to this planet that I'm about to inherit? You know, and she didn't say hey, Aunt Tamar, you know, shoot. But you know, I felt really responsible, I felt I felt called out it got me to just look at my life and intricacy and it you know, really started small and and then with each thing that became a habit, I think that's the difference is I'm definitely I'm no martyr, creating habits might be difficult. But once you have a habit, you don't even think about it anymore. So I kind of started with one change at a time. And once it became a habit, then I could move on to the next change. And I started really tiny, like, you know, Bring your reusable water bottle, you're not allowed to buy water, and we grew up drinking out of water fountains, why are you buying plastic water bottles? You know, a lot of people asked me about the car aspect, but that was that's something honestly, for my mental health and, and just my connection to my community. It's just been such a blessing to be able to do that. It's been a real gift. But I I often tell many of my friends and family who say, Well, I couldn't possibly do that, then you don't have to like there's but maybe you could just park your car in your driveway one weekend and have a car free weekend. Is that possible? Then I think about it that way. And I talk to my students about in this way, too. It's to begin with what's possible, not what's impossible, because that's how we make real positive change.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 19:29

In the Daily Bruin article written about you and your changes that you've made in 2019, you'd phrase it as a sense of personal social health. But what is that how did you decide on that those choice of words versus planet health?

T Tamar Christensen 19:47

So because it wasn't the planet that pushed me to get rid of my car initially, initially, I just didn't. I came back from a trip abroad and where the transit transportation is so wonderful. All, and my husband and I never ever rent cars when we travel, we always travel to some place where there's great transit. And I came home from a wonderful six week trip, I, my father had died just about six months prior to that. And we were traveling for six months through

Scandinavia. And it just, I felt so rejuvenated. And I came back to Los Angeles, I, I just got so angry that I had to get back in my car, because it had all of these. Nothing, it didn't, nothing about that felt good to me, you know, I just spent six weeks with people in all of these countries, meeting new people on the buses and trains and, you know, sharing a beer here or there, you know, sharing community. And coming back to Los Angeles that felt extremely fractured. Like I was just kind of ripped out of that. And I was going to live this very solitary life here in Los Angeles, because we kind of have the cocoon of our of our cars protecting us from those interactions. So that was when my husband and I started just entertaining ideas about how we could just drive less, we had no intention of getting rid of our car. We did like a car free weekend, then we did another and then our rule only rule was we couldn't change anything we had to do, we just had to do it without a car. And then that went really well. So then we flipped it and said, what if we did car free weekdays for a couple of weeks, and we could only drive on the weekends? And that went really well. And then we said we were like, well, what if we try a car free month. And we just park the car in front of the house and see what life is like for a whole month going grocery shopping and going to the farmers market and doing seeing friends and birthday parties and happy hours and, and commuting and all of those things. And we were about two weeks into that 30 day period. When we were having tea one morning and I just said, Do you want to just sell the damn thing. It started to feel like an album loss. In the meantime, my husband had done the finances to figure out our car was paid for how much was it actually costing us like a paid for vehicle with no problems whatsoever. And once we started running those numbers, it made financial sense to that was my goodness, I think, seven or eight years, almost eight years ago now.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 22:23

You're such a great storyteller, I have to say and you know, as a writer, do you also see environmental storytelling like poke through poetry or film or fiction as a way to motivate people moving forward?

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Tamar Christensen 22:39

Oh, absolutely. I think storytelling is absolutely crucial to how we how we solve our climate crisis, because storytelling is about people. I'm I'm a history. I'm a trained historian. So my undergraduate and graduate degrees are are both in history. And I fell in love with history because history isn't about. For me, history isn't about dates. It's not about wars. It's not about who won necessary. I mean, it is those things. But ultimately, it's about people's stories. So that's something that's very close to me. And I think how I've come to this discussion about our climate crisis is very much about that. That in fact, when I taught English Composition, five w, we read Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower together. And my students were just so floored by these stories of, you know, of failing capitalism and climate crisis, because they can really see it in their life all around them, the book takes place in 2024. And they were reading it with that in the very, you know, just coming up around the corner. And they really connected to that in their own stories. And I think this is why our stories are so important because people can not only identify us and see themselves in us, but we can also start to see how rich and diverse the fabric is of our climate crisis. We have so much to gain from listening to each other's stories and finding our where we meet each other so that we can move forward together that I can't imagine. I can't imagine talking about our climate crisis without it and I have to apologize right now because my backyard chickens are making a huge noise.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 24:38

Well, that gets us to backyard chickens and living a zero waste lifestyle, you know, which I know. I've always contemplated having chickens, but they are social and so you can't leave them behind even right. So some practices are more difficult than others. You know, there's a lot of time involved. Orbed and so forth. So in your life and in your, where you come from, we've talked about, like, There's choices. It's a personal choice, it's incremental, you can gamify it like you and your husband did, like, let's do it or two weeks and see how it goes. Where you give information, like, you know, I'm thinking that developmental stage of choice of students is really a great time to to really open up people's minds that can then help implement change. So tell me, yeah, well, how do you? How do you make it more accessible to your students, or others that you might talk to about this?

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Tamar Christensen 25:37

Oh, I, oh, my goodness, Wendy, I just I've had, I've just wrapped up the most fabulous term, I think ever just, I taught a climate communication course for the professional writing minor. And my students job is to read hard science, specifically from the IPCC, which is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whatever is the most current version of that which they release something every year. So to read that hard science, and then to translate some aspect of it into lay language, so maybe during maybe via social media, or an op ed or to their representative, my students come out of that feeling so empowered, and at the end, they go, but I'm also just and they fill in the blank, I'm still in college, or I don't have access, or I don't these things. So I invite my 134 students to join me in my backyard for a potluck at the end of the term. And I give them the tour of what what my home looks like what choices I've made, and they get to meet and hold chickens. I had the TGIF committee here this quarter, and all of them shares told me with their sashes for graduation holding our chickens. We didn't initially want chickens. I'm a long term vegetarian since 1994. Ovo lacto, I was just learning how to compost and I was learning that you need nitrogen in your compost to help things break down. So I went on my buy nothing group and I heard that chicken poop was great for that, because I had trouble finding brown materials to add for nitrogen. And one of my neighbors to streets over was like, Yeah, I've got two chickens, I clean out the Cooper weeks come on by. So every two weeks, I'd walk over with, you know, a storage container and pick up all of the hay and chicken droppings and definitely got chicken fever after that. And then a couple of chickens showed up on my buy nothing group, a woman was moving out of state, she couldn't take them with them. And so I just showed a picture to my husband and said, Hey, look what we're getting today, you know, and we just kind of jumped in. And now I can't imagine my life without them. They're wonderful, very smart animals. They're just really incredible. So the eggs are very, they're just a nice perk, but it's certainly not why we got them in the first place. It's that's like a sort of nice side effect, if you will. But I'd say that they are farmers first part of our regenerative agriculture that's going on in our tiny little plot of Earth. They're an integral part of our my gardening here and raising food, because of their chicken poop and all the fertilizer it offers. And secondly, they're our pets. We love them so so dearly. And I think it's really important for instructors, you don't have to open every part of your life, but I think it's a lot of my colleagues will say it is that it's important for them to see us as real people. And I think it's really important. When I can, I can't always do it, but to also show them what kind of future they might choose for themselves. When when that opportunity arises. It may not be here right now, but they can stow that away for when I get my own whatever this is what I want to do. I

tell them I wish I had known all this when I was their age i It wouldn't have been as hard for me because they're just starting out, they can choose any kind of path that they want to. It's so much harder to undo old bad habits and create new ones than it is to start fresh and say I get to choose for the first time and move forward.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 29:09

I've heard a lot about your passion and your sort of evolution to where you are now. How do you feel it has shaped your identity and your values at this stage your practices that you've adopted over time?

T Tamar Christensen 29:26

Well, when, look I'm about to turn 50 This summer, and it has it I think it has made me like just feel so prepared for this next chapter in my life. All of this has caused me to slow down, get to know people in really deep ways not in surface, rather than many friends. I have a small group and I know my community members really well and it's really shaped my identity in ways that have has really just gotten me in touch with all All the things I care about, and let go of the things that I don't. I'm so, so grateful for this journey that I've been on. If I was looking to do this for myself, I don't think I could have done it. It had to happen, like so many things in my life, just sort of stumbling from one thing to the next going, Okay, I need to work on that now or I want or that looks interesting, or how will where will that take me? It's kind of how I've approached my entire adult life. So but this journey has had really an indelible effect on on my identity in those ways.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 30:35

What kind of advice would you give people who might be longing for that lifestyle, again, slowing down and smelling the roses, right and walking their neighborhoods?

T Tamar Christensen 30:48

Make space wherever you can, I mean, it's, it's not possible for everyone. But you know, I really carve out space for this, this is what I care about. And so I know when I'm drifting back toward that sort of frenetic life, when I start to feel frustrated that I haven't been in my garden, much the last couple of weeks, I know that that's, that's a kind of sign to me that I'm not taking the time, it's time for myself, but it's time for my garden to and so that's going to look different for each of us, whatever the thing is, that made you feel calm, is probably the thing that you need to make space for. I ran an accidental Farmers Market out of my driveway during the pandemic pandemic, every week for two years. And I didn't expect to do it, it just sort of grew into that. At one point, I was hosting 90 families for picking up fresh fruits and vegetables from my driveway had to borrow to other driveways in my neighborhood to be able to safely planted out. And I realized in that moment, they were all coming every week to you know, pick up a box of vegetables from a local farmer that I had a connection with, and who really needed the financial help, because all of the markets had been shut down. So it was a win win for my community and for the farmer, I realized that I really deeply loved connecting with my various

hyper local community on on that level. And so it's not just about isolating myself on my property and gardening here. But I really crave those kinds of deep community connections, I've learned to recognize how good they are for me, they're not just good for other people. So it's not just altruism. And I think a lot of people, you know, I hear that a lot, like, you know, it's oh, how altruistic or Oh, like eco martyr, but it's, it's not those things like I really benefit so much from them. And it just happens to be that so many of our climate solutions are win win for everybody.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 32:53

Well, you really have focused a lot on the social well being which in the end, we are finding is really the most important thing for your health. For instance, having poor social well being is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day kind of thing. And it's also a stronger predictor for longevity. And we're learning from an extraordinary researcher at UCLA that living a life of meaning and purpose, which is like your nourish la work is actually going to help people with their blood pressure, their diabetes, all sorts of things, just doing things that are giving and you get, reap the benefits personally. So not that that should be necessarily your motivation. But it is a good feedback loop.

T Tamar Christensen 33:39

I'm very excited about fall quarter I'll be I'll be teaching a service learning course, two sections of it actually, in the fall. And I'll and I'm designing it and working with a cohort this summer to design a course that focuses on environmental justice, and food insecurity. And so nourish le will be a big part of that. And I'm really so excited for that, because I think it will help students with exactly what you're just talking about Wendy is that, like, service learning isn't just about, you know, sort of white saviorism. Let me come in and fix your problem in the way I think I should, but really getting involved in community work that listens to the community, and it gives back to you in the process.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 34:22

That's tremendous, because that's a really great way of having a sense of belonging, which is a huge driver for well being if you feel like you belong and giving and being part of a community that's working together. Congratulations, such as I'm so glad to hear that it warms my heart speaking of the heart that expands hearing this great work that you're doing. So just to finish up which we do this question to all our guests is what does it mean for you to live well?

T Tamar Christensen 34:54

Well, so much of what we've talked about today I you know, I want to say part a big part This is connecting to myself. But it's a bit complicated. When you were saying, fitting in is a big part of this, I think so much of my work comes from not really feeling like I did fit in, and especially in academia, as a, I'm a veteran, and I wasn't returning older students. So I didn't finish my undergraduate till I was about 29 years old, and thought I was way behind. I think, for me, so much of living well is helping my students see that you don't have to make perfect choices to

get to where you're supposed to be. And to feel great about it. You know, I worked in corporate America for a number of years, and I left it because I just felt like my soul was dying. It just wasn't it. So that life of meaning is something that I've pursued really aggressively. And I'm and we have so many students at UCLA who come that are man, they are at the top of their A game that are they wouldn't be in, they wouldn't get in, right, they have to be at the top of that. And usually they have a very straight and narrow, I have to do it this way I have to get here it has to be in this order. And what I for me to live well is what I hope I can show them is that whatever comes your way, it's a matter of it turning into a speed bump, rather than a roadblock. And those speed bumps just take you to that living well, they take you to a place where you can understand what is right for you, and what's going to be good for you. And that's also going to be good for those all around you at the same time. For me, it's these all of our all of my climate subject work is just a way to sort of tap into that with my students to help them see that, you know, not only do they get a voice at the university, but they get they get a say in our in our climate crisis. It's it's their futures, it's their lives. And so that confluence, I can't even say it's an intersection, because it's so many pieces coming together. That confluence of of all of those things. You know, it just I wake up every morning, feeling like, I can't believe that I can buy groceries and keep a roof over my head by getting to talk to students about these incredibly important ideas. And some of the smartest young people in our country every day, like that's, I'm just I'm so so grateful for that.

D

Dr. Wendy Slusser 37:29

Wow, I mean, what you're offering is a buffet of colors of vegetables and fruit to these students. And then they bring it together and you give them the exposure but also the skills to digest all those foods together with your writing courses and all the they could follow you it sounds like all the way through their experience, even to grad school. So thank you for that. Thank you for being such an inspiration to all of our students and also to me and so many others in the community. I really appreciate it.

T

Tamar Christensen 38:09

Thank you for giving me space to be able to do those things.

D

Dr. Wendy Slusser 38:14

Thanks. Right on. I admire how Tamar really does practice what she preaches. She gives her students and the people in her life tangible tools and reflection exercises, giving them a sense of agency in the climate crisis. I hope you enjoyed this conversation as much as I did. And don't forget to subscribe and share this episode with your community. We'll talk to you soon. This episode has been brought to you by the Seminole healthy campus initiative Center at UCLA