



Inspirational

Episode 24

Amy Sharp

Education & Wellbeing Practitioner

*This episode of **INSPIRATIONAL** features a “True Story” from the life of
Ms. Amy Sharp (Education & Wellbeing Practitioner)*

“When I was approached to write this article for “Inspirational”, it awakened an aspect of myself that I had been resisting. Despite feeling so much more self-aware now, at age 36, than I ever have before, there was still an element of myself I wasn’t fully ready to acknowledge. I believe, if you are reading this, you may resonate with parts of my story. So here is how we wake up that dormant piece of ourselves that is all too often and easily dismissed.

Inspirational? Me? How am I inspirational? I would love to be, it’s a dream to be, but I have always seen this as a goal, something to achieve in the future; when all of my personal goals and dreams have been ticked off the list, when I am at peace, when my family are at peace, when life is fulfilled, no challenge can set us back and I am THAT person with it all finally figured out. That’s inspirational isn’t it?

My life has always been full of raw emotion and a whirlwind of jumbled thoughts and ideas. I cried a lot as a young child and was easily moved by the simplest of things. The empathy I felt for others from a very young age was all too overbearing at times. Growing up, I have always

been creative, intuitive, unique and a bit of an excitable, kooky character. When I had a positive mindset and confidence, I had an almost magical ability to easily attract people and opportunities; friends, romances, experiences, and even the exact first car I had set my sights on (namely, a red VW Polo that a stranger I had randomly met just so happened to mention he was selling just at the right time!) I was over the moon!

Despite my carefree attitude and abundant empathy for others, I had often been labelled, from a young age, as “too sensitive” “lazy” “a dreamer” “messy” “too much” or simply “not quite good enough”, to name a few. Over time, many of these negative associations began to work their way into my internal dialogue and shape my future identity, without a single conscious thought.

I became much quieter in my late teens, having learned not to say something too silly or too out there, not to attract unwanted attention, to avoid being ridiculed, rejected, neglected, or worse, hated. In hindsight, I realise not everyone is right for you and you are not right for everyone else, either, but that doesn't mean there is anything wrong with you, that's just the way humanity creates their sense of belonging, their tribe; they accept some and reject others. Don't get me wrong, I was an incredibly fortunate child in many ways; I had a caring family, secure household, food, comfort, good friends and I was quite popular, but I had a tendency to get pulled in by the things that weren't working out so well. That friendship that didn't last, that boyfriend who cheated on me, that teacher who kept putting me down, these were the things that consumed me.

By the time I had reached adulthood and was starting a new adventure at university, I was a smaller version of myself. I was timid, (unless I knew you well and felt I could be my true self). I was unorganised, lazy, anxious and felt not good enough. I scrambled through my drama and creative writing degree, often staying up late to finish work at the last minute. I had a close knit group of friends who I shared halls with and we later went on to live together in our own house. Within the house there was a person who I would say was a very toxic personality and over time began gaslighting me. She played on my anxieties and fears and manipulated situations to make me feel worse about myself. I let this person get to me, even though I knew and understood she was suffering with her own inner turmoil and trauma from the loss of her mother at a young age. I desperately tried to focus on all the wonderful things about her, but eventually she broke me and the relationship was severed for me and everyone else in our household. She was asked to leave by all of us. To this day, I know she still blames me for this but I don't have any bad feelings for her. One of the most important lessons I have learned is

to forgive. It only serves to damage you if you can't learn to forgive and let go of that which you can't change. Things that have happened to you, that you feel are unjust, can weigh heavy on your heart for a very long time. Little did I know at that time, that this relationship was just the beginning when it came to attracting toxic relationships.

When I finally passed my Degree and was free to roam, I had my heart set on working within tv and film production. I yearned for a life of adventure and always wanted to do something a little different from the norm. I had shacked up with my boyfriend at the time and spent all my days applying for entry roles. It seemed luck wasn't on my side and I was faced with constant rejection. The industry is notoriously hard to get into and just to add salt to the wound, my boyfriend at the time had used his family connections to bag himself a place within the industry. I wanted to feel pleased for him but the relationship had been turning sour for some time before this.

I finally got a break and was accepted to work in a production office for 6 months. I really enjoyed working with my small team, but even then felt quiet and unnerved by the expectation to be sociable with everyone in order to get ahead. I struggled with my inner conflict of wanting to move up the ranks quickly but also wanting to remain my authentic self. At that time, I had very little confidence in myself or my abilities and the world seemed huge compared to little old anxious me. I soon started to feel like I had lost my sense of belonging. I had stayed with my boyfriend in his home town and was far away from my own family and friends, I began to feel incredibly isolated and alone.

In-between contracts I would strive and strive to find the next one, but nothing was coming in easily and I couldn't afford to pay my rent. I started to feel so low. Life had so much prosper and potential when I was a younger child, I thought I could achieve anything, but the reality was so different and so difficult.

I remember feeling so down one-day that I sat crying wishing I could go home but I was feeling totally stuck. In that moment, my grandad popped into my head. He had passed when I was much younger, so I began thinking about how I wished I knew him better. I called my mum to tell her how I was feeling about coming home and mentioned that I had thought about Grandad. She said it was his birthday that day and my jaw dropped. I had no idea when his birthday was, so this random incident suddenly felt like a divine intervention. It wasn't long after this that I was woken up in the early hours by my boyfriend leaning across me to get my phone. I sat up and took the phone off him to discover he had accidentally sent a text to me that was meant to be sent to his mistress. It's safe to say that this was one of those moments when I completely

lost my cool. I packed my bags immediately, asked a friend to come with a van to collect me and my stuff and I moved back to my home town, to live with my sister and nieces.

Starting all over again felt like climbing a mountain, despite the fact that things weren't particularly working out before. It can sometimes feel like a cruel slap in the face to admit defeat, embrace a failure and move on. I was really happy to be with my family again and step by step began piecing my life back together. I got a job in recruitment, which certainly wasn't the dream, but it helped me get driving lessons and start saving for a house. I was also spending every weekend out with friends that I had not seen for so long. I had an audacious appetite for alcohol and letting my hair down on the weekend. I felt that when I was drinking, I could let go and be myself, and suddenly, I just didn't care what people thought or had to say about me. I passed my driving test and felt like everything was finally working out for me. I had always wanted to drive but had to put lessons on hold while at university. Finally, I was on the right track! My best friend found an ad for a job that couldn't be more perfect for me. While I was at university, I had worked with a professional theatre company that trained homeless people as actors and toured with poignant forum theatre, becoming a catalyst for changes within government policy and beyond. This had been my biggest passion and takeaway from my university experience, other than sort of learning how to wash my own clothes, make a tuna pasta bake and not so easily trust the people we call friends.

The job role was working with homeless young people, developing ideas to prevent youth homelessness. I wanted to pitch the theatre group idea to see if using theatre as peer education could make an engaging difference in the community. The job was really well paid for a recent graduate and I wasn't sure I would have the slightest chance. I remember, a close family member suggesting I was aiming too high by going for this role as it was more than they had ever earned. Well, to my absolute surprise and glee, I got the job! I could finally start making the difference in the world that I truly wanted to make.

Shortly after starting the role, life all seemed to be just perfect. I would go out with my friends and enjoy a drink or two, or three... and let loose. It was during this period that I met someone who was about to change my life forever.

“Never date a man with the same name as your brother.” I vividly recall the bar lady laughing. Date? I'm not going to date him, he is too old for me and to be honest, seems a bit of a waster. We are just having a laugh.

He was a funny guy and everyone seemed to know and love him in the locals. He was 16 years my senior and seemed to spend all his time outside of work propping up the bar with his mates. It suited me and my friend, at the time, to banter with these guys on our weekly local visits. Before long I started noticing a twinkle in his eye and we became a little more than friends, despite the nagging feeling that this wasn't the right person for me. I later discovered he was divorced with 3 sons that he wasn't in contact with, of course, he told me it wasn't his decision not to see them. I felt really drawn to helping him. He seemed like a really nice guy, quite intelligent and witty compared to the rest of them and he just needed some support. We were together for a year before I met his sons, he moved into my new house with me and we decided to start a family. We spent a couple of years trying to have a baby but it didn't seem to be working so I visited my GP who put me on medication to help with ovulation. I fell pregnant that same month but something felt off from the start.

I found myself singing along to that Adele song often, “ I know you haven't made your mind up yet, but I would never do you wrong...” something inside me was telling me that this baby wasn't going to stick, it hadn't decided to stay. When I reached 11 weeks of pregnancy, just under a week before I was due to go for my first scan, I started bleeding. This was, and still is to this day, the most traumatic experience of my life so far. I was a baby myself at age just 26 and was nowhere near ready to face that experience. Nobody tells you what to expect when something like this happens.

After losing the baby, I became gravely depressed, I was ruminating on thoughts that maybe I would never be able to be a mum and the whole experience consumed my thoughts every waking hour. I was surrounded by acquaintances that had children and it just felt so painful to be me. I had many days of feeling useless and suicidal. I felt like I was sabotaging my job because I was often late and couldn't get up, I was drinking more and more and my partner had become controlling and possessive. He was controlling what I could wear, where I should go, who he did and didn't like out of my friends and I eventually began to feel isolated once more. I wanted to try and fix the relationship and he claimed he did too. By this time, the need for a baby had outgrown all and any other need or desire in my life. I felt like a baby would make me whole again and fix everything.

I began waking at 4.44 every morning in the months preceding the miscarriage. Every time I turned and looked at the clock there were those numbers! It was so uncanny, that I started to research what this could mean. This was the beginning of my first spiritual awakening. I joined online spiritual communities and started my journey of spiritual and personal development. I

was fascinated by the idea of Angelic beings and being sent signs and messages through repetitive numbers and wanted to learn more about all of this. I have always had a fascination with the paranormal so became totally enthralled with this other world.

The most amazing thing started to happen when I started sharing my story within these groups. I met women that had the same experiences all over the world and we became friends with a shared passion in spiritual development. I started to feel like I belonged somewhere again and my eyes were opened to a life that was bigger than the local pub and having a child. There was still so much more for me to learn, discover and do. My healing journey had started from the moment I decided to follow the synchronicity in my life and stop ignoring my intuition. I went on development courses alone to pursue my interests. I was driven and determined to continue to follow whatever I was drawn to and always honour my true spirit and nature.

Nine months after the miscarriage, I found out I was pregnant, I had given up on the idea and hadn't given it another thought since discovering my passion for angels and spiritual development. Our relationship was not in a good place, we were financially struggling despite both earning good wages. I was by this time working for a community arts charity. He continued to drink too much and exhibit abusive behaviour. The changes I had hoped for in him were not happening.

There was a deep sense of fear within me about letting go and starting all over again, this time, on my own with my baby. When my son was born, it was the happiest day of my life. I couldn't even put in to words how wonderful it feels to become a mother for the first time. The flood of hormones and array of mixed emotions is certainly a unique recipe that could never be replicated. I was so in love but also scared, confused and unsure; could I really do this? Be responsible for this little human? How can I be a mother ?

Just over 1 year later after many emotional breakdowns, heart to hearts and despairing pleas, I drummed up the courage to ask my partner, my son's father, to leave. His drinking was increasing and I often found myself trawling around the pubs, babe in arms, trying to find him. I was done. Something inside of me had been burning for a while (and it wasn't the stitches from birth !) I kept getting called to finish it, to leave, to start afresh and not allow myself and my son to be treated this way any longer. So I followed it. I no longer felt fearful, I suddenly felt empowered. I had come to the point where I had to take ownership of my life, my health, my destiny, and most importantly, give this little blue eyed boy the life and family he truly deserved.

I have never looked back from that moment, my life isn't entirely fixed and I wouldn't say I'm an expert or guru in self-care just yet, but I went on an incredible journey of self-discovery from that point in my late 20's to now in my almost late 30's. Serendipity brought me to a man I have known all my life but had never considered a love interest. We found something special in each other. He had been through a turbulent relationship too and also had a son. We fell in love and became a blended family, bought a family home together, had another son and daughter together and got married.

My mental health has still been a battle when those romantic and euphoric moments flee away. I was diagnosed with postnatal depression after the birth of my second son and put on antidepressants which I didn't want to do but felt I had no choice. Sometimes my mind was so dark that I couldn't bare being there anymore and I couldn't risk it. My family were and are more important to me than anything in the world. I fell pregnant with my daughter when our son was 6 months old and I cried and cried. Of course I loved her and I had an immediate feeling this was our daughter, but I was petrified of what this juggle might do to me. I was already anxious taking care of three children and often felt completely inept at the mother/housekeeper role. How do mothers carry this mental and physical workload? All day, and all night. It was really hard and I was hard on myself. Always striving for perfectionism but always falling short. Simply because, I'm not perfect. None of us are.

I began to notice that my extreme mood swings seemed to be cyclical... depression came around the time of ovulation and lasted until the start of my menstrual cycle. I researched and researched to find answers because the diagnosis of post-natal depression or depression itself didn't seem right to me. I felt that the GP was missing something. I discovered Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD), an extreme form of the usual PMT that women are affected by during their cycle. I started tracking my cycle and month after month it made sense. I was feeling anxious, depressed and suicidal for two weeks of every month and only having 2 weeks of reprieve before the next cycle began. It was very difficult to be trapped in this mind sometimes. The only answer seemed to be hormonal contraception or anti-depressants. Both of which hadn't previously worked for me.

My eldest son is a mini me, he displays the same volcanic emotions and mood swings, the extreme sense of empathy and sensory differences. It was through researching to support him with his wellbeing that I stumbled upon ADHD. I had worked in the not for profit sector for a decade and worked with young people with learning differences and neurodiversity but I don't

think I ever really grasped the exact nature or full extent of the differences. Now I understand why.

*Those children were my people. All I could see was how similar we were; creative, impulsive, too giving, too loving, emotionally sensitive, extra funny, extra adverse to rejection and negativity, often thinking outside of the box, overthinking, being funny, clever, different; in the most amazing ways. On the journey to help my son, I helped us both. I was diagnosed with ADHD at age 35 just before Christmas. It was like going through the stages of grief while processing everything. There was so much to learn, so much was missed, how didn't I know? How did no one know? This diagnosis opened up a new sense of belonging to me... a better understanding of myself and why I have had some of the struggles I have had. It has affected my ability to make and sustain suitable relationships, commit myself to a focussed career goal and most pressingly, my ability to self-regulate my emotions and cognitive behavioural patterns. I now understand that PMDD is a diagnosis very much linked to women with ADHD. This journey has sparked a passion in me that has led to me opening the doors to a brand new venture, once again. I currently work for a small local charity, **YiS Young People's Mental Health**, developing a new wellbeing coaching programme. Alongside this, I have started studying for my MSc Degree in Psychology of Mental Health and Wellbeing at The University of Wolverhampton with the aim of developing new research in order to improve current mental health services and overall wellbeing within our society. This is another journey that is sure to have ups and downs, good days and bad days... and most certainly, those I just can't go on days. But this snippet of my life experience that I have willingly shared with you has given me insight into the valuable healing that is still in motion within me. Because, let's face it, nobody is THAT person who has it all figured out. Not really.*

So I can now agree that, YES! I am Inspirational. Now, today and always.

Why not try this little exercise for yourself... because this is the little piece of magic missing in all of us. The part we often dismiss. Reflect on some of the challenges you have overcome in life and those times you didn't think you could possibly get back up and try again. No matter how big or small the obstacle was. You did it. YOU are inspirational.”

INSPIRATIONAL isn't it?

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