

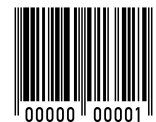
BSB

THE PODCAST

EP. 261

Killian Easterly-Smith

THE BYTE



[MUSIC PLAYING] Kirsten: Hello, friends, and welcome back to another episode of the podcast. I want to just give you a little bit of a warning for this episode.

Addiction, human trafficking, and suicide are mentioned. So if any of these subjects really are triggering for you, please take care of yourself and maybe skip this episode. I will let you know that my conversation with Lillian Easterly Smith is one that reminded me of the resilience that we all possess. It reminded me of the just tenacious nature of the human spirit and how even at our lowest points, we have the ability to rise. Now Lillian has created a very special place, Aruka Ranch in Florida. And Lillian shares a really powerful story of how she got to the place in her life where she had the strength, the vision, the imagination to change people's worlds. And let me give you a hint. It was after she changed her own world, her own life, and worked with what had happened to her, and then realized that she could bring what she learned to others. She's an incredible woman. She's someone who doesn't give up. And her miracle, while in my mind, is actually herself, it's also that she's translated her experiences. And like the hero or heroine in Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, she's bringing the treasure that she found there to everyone else. So now let's get to Lillian and my incredible conversation with her this week.

Lillian: My first marriage came out of my addiction. I was 17 years old. I had no clue what I was doing. And that was not a good situation. I have a wonderful daughter who came out of that marriage and we're like best friends now. That hasn't always been that case. We had the teenage years or like this, but she's like my best friend now. You know, the interesting thing was probably about seven years before I got into recovery, my dad got sober and got into recovery. So we started seeing some changes in him. And he was one of the first people that I wanted to talk to when I really hit my bottom. And that included like a suicide attempt. And when I talked to him, he was basically like, I can't tell you one way or the other. You need to figure this out. I can give you information that's going to help you to figure out what you need to do and what's going on. So he was very instrumental, I think, in the beginning. But like you were saying, being the first one, I mean, he was, but there was so much distance. You know, Miles, you know, it wasn't like he was here and we could go to meetings together or do any of that together. So when I started my journey, it was very lonely, extremely lonely because everybody that I knew were, they were into the party scene. And I actually had somebody, one of my coworkers, told me, and I'll never forget it. I liked you better when you drank. Like what? Yeah. Because that was just, yeah, couldn't believe it. Couldn't believe I heard those words. So it was pretty lonely in the beginning. So coworkers, you know, they think you're weird because you're so different. I worked in an insurance sales office, group sales. And so drinking was just a part of everything. I mean, you'd go to lunch, you'd have drinks, and everybody would go out after. So I stopped all of that. And I was like, nope, I don't have the desire anymore.

I don't want that life anymore. Yeah. And they tried to lure me back into that too. There were a couple of people in particular, but I was like, no, I don't want any part of it. I don't want it anymore. We can look back now and we can see how that developed our character and expanded our heart. We have more patience with people. And I think a depth of understanding that a lot of people don't have because of the hardship that we've gone through and enduring the meanness of people that are basically ignorant. Let's face it. Ignorant. Yeah. Yeah. [MUSIC PLAYING]

Kirsten: Just to let you know, Aruka is the Hebrew word which means to heal, restore, and rebuild, to bring into wholeness. And there is no doubt in my mind that Aruka Ranch is doing just that for everyone who passes through their doors. Now, rebuilding a life, especially when one has suffered such incredible trauma, looks different for each of us in that we're all not going to need the same tools and messages that everyone else is going to. But the work that Lillian is doing, the work that her husband's doing, the work that the ranch is doing, is speaking to so many people. I don't think that everyone understands that about 20 million people had a substance use disorder in 2019. And about 42% more people were homeless in Lee County, Florida, alone in 2021. And now 60% more are homeless after Hurricane Ian in 2022. It's this silent epidemic that I think either we don't want to witness or it's happening in front of us and we just don't recognize it. But Lillian and her husband and the Ranch are here, to help those who escape the clutches of addiction, of homelessness, and human trafficking, and for that, I am grateful. I just want to thank everyone who listens to this podcast and everyone who's left a rating or written a review. I'm so grateful to you.





You have no idea. It just makes me so happy. So thank you. Thank you for listening. And here's my one request. Be like Lillian. Lillian has always her entire life, even in the depths of her addiction. I feel like some part of Lillian's soul always wanted to rise. There's just something inside of her that is unstoppable, that refuses to let go of the vision of something better. And so, eternally, we can look at Lillian because she's always rising. She's rising to the world and its challenges. She's rising for others so that they may see by her example that overcoming addiction is possible. And she's rising in her day-to-day life because she's just out there. She's being herself. She claims her past. She claims where it's led her. And without shame, without embarrassment, and with so much humility, she says, look, this is who I am. And this is how I can be present to you. And so be like Lillian and be yourself. Own your history, your story, your own self. Be brave in this world and be beautiful. And just know that that self, yourself, and how you show up, it's going to change everything for some people. It can literally change people's worlds. So I'm excited that you're all going to go out and be your best selves and just show up for whoever crosses your path because we really are building an army. It's an army of people who are unstoppable. It's an army of people who bring beauty. And it's an army of people who show up and are unashamedly and unabashedly themselves. [MUSIC PLAYING]