



Eco-Anxiety & How to Deal With it | Heather White

[00:00:00] Guest Intro - Heather White

Darin: Hey, everybody. This is Darin Olien. This is The Darin Olien Show. Stoked to have you here. I have an amazing guest. Her name is Heather White. She's the founder of One Green Thing. That's right, One Green Thing: Discover Your Hidden Power to Help Save the Planet. It's really helping us on the planet because the planet's gonna brush us off really quick. I was so eager to have this conversation because she comes from the political spectrum, and environmental policy perspective. She is an expert in this space, over 20 years of experience leading and then advising non-profits, increasing organizational performance, and directing innovation and advocacy for campaigns, especially around the earth and the planet and all of these crazy things that we're doing. It's almost like if we were trying to hurt ourselves and this precious planet and the beautiful insects and creatures and animals, it'd be what we're doing. You look around, everything's polluting. We have plastic on everything. We have chemicals in our water, in our food. We're growing things, stripping it. Our earth is crumbling and crying. We have overconsumption of subsidized meat and fish and dairy and chemicalized everything. It's crazy. One thing that happened in Down to Earth Season 1 is they got a flood of young vibrant kids that didn't know much about this. We weren't hitting the drum of environmentalism but they were touched and inspired by the show, Down to Earth, and then they were like, we want to do something to help. That's why I was so excited about this conversation with Heather and we talked a bit about that because her One Green Thing book and her movement forward were inspired and initiated in this next level by her daughter, her younger daughter. Her teenage daughter was asking evoking questions of how to get involved. So, she has an incredible book that actually helps you discover more of yourself and see where your strengths are to then apply them to your life and in this case, how can you help create more common sense in this world so that we're not hurting ourselves and hurting this precious earth in the process. So, listen to this episode with every person in your family, from the youngsters to the old and everyone in between because we are the change. The billions of us are directing change, but if you listen to mainstream media and are given information and direct your life based on that mostly fear, then you are paralyzed but you are not. So please, listen by the book, come together. So, enjoy this conversation because I know I did, a good friend, Heather White.

[00:03:28] Podcast Intro

Darin: You are listening to The Darin Olien Show. I am Darin, and it is my life's mission to find and share healthy and sustainable ways of living. In this podcast, I talk to inspiring people and professionals from around the world to uncover ways that we as humans can improve our lifestyles, strengthen our mindsets, and take better care of this beautiful planet we call home. If you're looking for motivation to take the next steps towards a happier, healthier life, then you're in the right place, and I'm stoked that you're here. So let's do this. This is my show, The Darin Olien Show.

[00:04:12] First Part of the Interview



Darin: Let's just unpack your journey a little bit because law, environmental, outdoor campaigns, like wow, you really kind of set yourself up and then obviously having a daughter and then everything else. You're really an authority in what works and what doesn't and I mean, the lobbying efforts and the political side of this thing. What were the sparks of this is what I want to do and this is what I want to study? How did that occur for you?

[00:04:42] What sparked Heather's environmentalism

Heather: That's such a great question, Darin. I think the reason I got interested in conservation really is time outside. I grew up right near Smoky Mountain National Park in East Tennessee, and my earliest memories were with my parents outside hiking and camping, and those early days kind of stuck with me. But I grew up near Oak Ridge National Laboratory, so I knew about all these opportunities with clean energy. I also knew the challenges with cancer clusters, nuclear wastes, strip mining in that area. So I would see beautiful scenery but also know that there were real environmental impacts, and I heard a lot about environmental justice growing up. I went to law school and enjoying the Gore campaign in 2000 and it didn't work out the way I had hoped, Darin. I'll leave it at that. But I studied environmental science, I went to law school, and then I worked on Capitol Hill for a while and ran an environmental health organization in DC. Then ran a non-profit partner to Yellowstone National Park, which is what brought me to Montana. Then it was really tough having kids that brought me to write this book. For me, my journey was in 2019. My older daughter who was 14 at the time told me she wanted to participate in the Greta Thunberg, it's fire climate strike, and it was happening at those from high school and I said to her, "of course- I'm an environmentalist- you should do this, you go for it". But I noticed it was gonna rain, and like a good parent would do, I said, "why don't I pick you up and I'll drive you to the protest site because you have a really heavy backpack and you're carrying a trumpet and that way, you don't have to carry all your stuff". And Darin, she was so offended by this offer. It was at the dinner table, so my younger daughter was there too and so was my husband, who by the way, my husband does all kinds of environmental policy works. He works on grizzly bear recovery. And so I was sitting at the table and she's like, "Mom, what are you talking about? You're gonna pick me up, it's the walkout, first of all. The whole point is for me to walk out of school and demonstrate. And secondly, you're gonna pick me up in a car when it's all about our dependence on fossil fuels, and you're worried about me getting rained on. What about the future?" From there, she really talked about where are Baby Boomers, where are Gen X, which we're a member of. People like to forget about Gen X but we're here. Where's Gen X, where are the millennials? You can't leave this all on our shoulders. And that is when I realized I need to create an opportunity for more people to see themselves in this movement, and I needed to dig into the mental health impacts of the climate crisis.

Darin: That's such an interesting thing. I have to out myself here. I am kind of sick of the terms because they're being politicized so much. So I just go, you know what, I like to use common sense. It makes no freaking common sense to be burning this and burning that when we can do this and that. So, I'm kind of divorcing myself from some of the terms just because I don't want to be associated with some bad politicization of some of that stuff. That said, when you actually ask people that may not be hitting the drum, may not know much about it all, but if there is a common-sense thing, like when you ask them, they're like yeah, I don't like to use this, I don't want to buy this water bottle. So there is inherently this anxiety.



It's not just this little class of people over here that are tree-hugging. It's everybody because you as a human know that this water bottle I have, where's it going? We know that, so I just wanna say that because I know that you cited in here that in your book, there was like 50%, there is eco-anxiety, and I would probably say that's probably even more if you start asking them about other stuff. So there's a massive amount of anxiety here.

[00:08:20] Eco-anxiety and its negative effects

Heather: There is, absolutely, Darin. I think that's such an important point that you raised because eco-anxiety, the American Psychological Association defines it as the chronic fear of environmental doom and most of the research has been about the climate crisis. But I think now, the climate crisis encompasses everything, plastic pollution, water pollution, toxic chemicals, any environmental issue. And once you start learning about these things, like going on a journey like so many of your viewers did with *Down to Earth*, you can't unlearn them, and you realize you need to get involved somehow, and that's really what the book is all about is trying to say, hey, here's a way for you to think about how you can use your unique strengths in service and taking action, these small actions every day, and you talk about this. You have a great Instagram reel all about the small choices you make and how important it is to not only, it's not so much about your carbon footprint as an individual, it's more about the culture change because if you're mindful today and I call that daily practice, a one green thing. If you do a one green thing each day based on your interest on your values, on your strengths, you can really shift the culture. And you're right about all the words we use and the polarization when it comes to climate crisis, and I even say in this book let's stop worrying about who believes in the climate crisis. Climate change is a scientific fact, 99.9% of scientists agree it is caused primarily by our human activity, our human choices for energy, and the transportation of burning fossil fuels. That doesn't even matter. Let's talk about solutions. I feel like that's so much of what you do because the solutions really are integrated with wellness, and so much of your mission is about wellness but caring for yourself and caring for the planet as part of caring for yourself.

Darin: Yes, it's integrated and you actually can't separate yourself. It's all integrated with all these faux materials now and chemicals and petroleums and everything else, but then you put it on your skin, and it's neutering you. Guess what? It's horrible as it goes down the drain. So that's where I think this powerful impact of awareness with bringing in integration because we're not integrated. It was so cool the way you put this up like the service superpower assessment that you have, and it's kind of what I would call them this powerful archetype. Talk to me about that because this is something that if I had this information at least in the first season that this is a place to help funnel people so that they can understand because it's also that self-assessment, like where are my strengths. So, why don't you break down this service superpower assessment that you have that helps people who they are, what they are, and helps them move forward to kind of integrate and be more than they are in the world.

[00:11:14] Everyone is needed in climate action

Heather: Thank you, Darin. The most important thing is for everyone to know that everyone is welcome and everyone is needed in climate action. So that's why I developed this assessment and it is a lot like Enneagram or Myers Briggs and you're absolutely right,



they're these archetypes. The point of them, there are seven different archetypes. They come from my more than 20 years of experience in environmental advocacy from Capitol Hill and being a lawyer to fundraising, you name it. So the seven archetypes, I'll just go through them really quickly. One is the adventurer, which I suspect you are. The Adventurer is someone who is a risk-taker, who loves the physicality of the outdoors. They're hands-on learners. They love to take people outside of their comfort zone. The adventurer is really important because you're a natural educator and teacher and you can help people be excited about the opportunities and the positivity that we have, as we're thinking about climate solutions. Then there's the beacon and this person is totally focused on social justice. They're the people who are comfortable, this is my older daughter. You just give them a megaphone or they're behind a podium and they're ready to protest. They'll speak truth to power. They're visionaries. They're often entrepreneurs. They're the people who can show you the way. Then there's the Influencer, which is all about people, people, people. And they're about connecting folks about helping people see each other in the movement and bringing them along. Then there's also the Philanthropist, which is kind of a big name, and it's not the monopoly guy with the monocle. The Philanthropist is the giver, and this is what I am, I'm a giver. They're all about giving time, resources, their networks to try to help the cause move forward. And without those resources, you really don't have a movement. Then there's the Spark, which is fun because a lot of my friends are like, "Oh my gosh, now know I have a role." The spark is the person who says sure I'm in. And without the person who's the cheerleader who's like, "Yeah, Darin, I'll go with you, sure. You want to go to Peru? I'm in, I'm in," without that person, that plus one, there is no movement. Then there's the Sage, which is focused on the spiritual aspects of nature. They can kind of bridge the divide across politics and also across generations, and they're very focused on how we can communicate. Then finally, there's the Wonk. A lot of environmentalists, as you know, and you've interviewed are Wonks. I think I know you have a lot of wonk in you too. They're all about the charts, the graphs, the data, the science, but I think one of the things we need to do as a community is to develop all aspects of the seven different archetypes so we can communicate better and bring more people in.

Darin: So these archetypes are these representations of the stronger pillows but obviously, in going through and you've brought it out beautifully in your book and you can start to see and reflect back where your strengths are to then not spin your wheels at certain things. Then also attract maybe, if you're not an adventurer, you attract and adventure and that's potentially how organizations could be gathered around this kind of movement.

Heather: Exactly, Darin. One of my dear friends told me that she has adventurer envy. She's like, I want to be an adventurer, but I'm just not. But when she found out she was a philanthropist, she was like, oh, great. You want me to bring a bunch of influencers together and raise money for this land trust, boom, I'm in, that I can do. But if you ask me to plan a canoeing trip, I'll be the spark, I'll go along, but that's not me. So I think that's important because the issue is so overwhelming people think I need to have a Ph.D. in climatology to be part of this movement. You don't need a Ph.D. in anything, but you do need to figure out how you can apply your strengths and the idea. In the book, I have a 21-day action plan, very similar to Superlife, 21-day plan, for you based on your strengths to do one thing each day, a one green thing each day with the idea that you're building a good habit, a sustainable habit that you're more likely to stick with because it's part of your identity because you're a



sage, and this is how you show up in the movement and show up for others. But it's also a way for you to create that culture shift, which is what we really need. And I feel like so much of your work is all about bringing people along with that cultural shift that we need, Darin, that's focused on the positive vision of the future. So much of our conversation is about taking away like you're going to take away my car, you're going to take away my nice house, you're going to take away my things, and we can create something better than before. This idea of the regenerative future, which I think you do such a great job of showing people, not just talking about it but showing them the opportunities that we have with the clean energy future. It's really exciting.

Darin: I mean, listen, the great Paul Hawken, when he describes regeneration, it's like you're not limiting anything, but you're following nature. And you put a seed in the ground, and it grows, and you get pleomorphic seeds from that. It's one plus one equals thousands. So that's the idea. I think we've reduced things down so much, okay, cool, you want a sustainable house, so you have a tent and solar panels and your stove doesn't work. It's like no, these things don't have to occur this way nor do you have to give up products. We know that products are being healthier and less chemicalized and things like that. So these are ways. And listen, let's talk about just the mental health side of things because I know for me that when I align myself with things that I care about that are beyond myself, the environment, clean energy, using my skills towards other things, it feels good, even though sometimes things don't move fast enough and whatever, but you're contributing to something that is greater than yourself, and that feels good from a mental perspective as well.

[00:16:55] Giving young people hope

Heather: Absolutely. I think one of the things we really need to focus on a society is this idea, I call it Think Beyond Your Age. This is a chapter in my book. The idea is intergenerational partnership. And these young people are really hurting. Post-pandemic, when you were talking about everything, the cascading crises of the pandemic, we have climate change, we have obviously racial injustice, we have super challenges politically, we have the war in Ukraine, talking about nuclear threats potentially, it is overwhelming if you're a teenager right now and there is a mental health crisis for young people. And what we need to be able to do is create space for them to share how they feel. That study that you were talking about eco-anxiety, there was a survey in September 2021, 10,000 young people globally, ages 16 through 25. One out of four said they did not want to have children because they're so worried about the future. 47% said they eco-anxiety interferes with their daily life, and 75% we're extremely worried about the future and what they're going to be inheriting. So we need to let them process all these emotions but also share with them the stories like you do and like you have so many times of the progress of things that we've overcome, of hope that we've witnessed in our lifetimes, and let them know that they're not alone. We need to really focus on what we can build together. I think that's an important part. And like you said, taking action and being aligned in service does make you feel better, and it can create that momentum we need.

Darin: I would say, in the face of every challenge is just infinite opportunity. I can't tell you how many people I've aligned within these past two years that are like, nope, it's now. We're talking money, we're talking clean energy, we're talking massively doing things different, we're talking alliances to scale food, so that would overnight create food security. So the



point is that in this hardship, we need to be here to go listen, process your feelings and this is a birth of an incubation of opportunity and possibility that also in the face of the biggest challenges in our lifetime or lifetimes is also the seed for so much opportunity of doing things differently. If we could have news, focus on that stuff, but we just have to keep hitting that drum more and more and allow kids to have outlets for productive opportunities to express not only that but express through action and to see that there are organizations and people that are coming together that are behind the changes that need to happen.

Heather: Amen, Darin. It's so true and I think that storytelling is really important. I try to do that in this book by saying, I'm not Heather White, the guide, telling you to buy this, not that. What I am saying is who are you? Who are you in service to others? What do you care about within this whole perspective to the environment? And here are opportunities of amazing solutions that are going on. What sets you on fire? What are you most excited about? And how can you contribute? I think that's really important is leaning into the opportunity in this positive vision, whether it's clean energy, whether it's one of the things I don't talk about in the book, but I discovered as I was researching the book, this idea of solar punk. It's getting artists and architects and scientists together to just draw what a green city could look like. If we didn't have to worry about physics or economics for just a second, what could it look like? What could it be like? What can we build together? I think that we can do something very, very exciting but first, we all need to take action and we have to understand that it's about all of us. I also love what you said just a few minutes ago about it is about individual action and it's about systemic change. But we can't have these big policy solutions or market solutions without individual's action. That action is what drives these big solutions to be able to take solar at scale for us to live like people do in Costa Rica and some of these amazing places that you showcase, like creating opportunities. One of the solutions I talked about is greening scope food. Great organizations that are working to try to do farm-to-table in school so kids have healthier nutrition in school, but it can also be a climate solution, a very powerful one as well. So there are all kinds of neat ways for us to be creative and harness the energy of these young people and their entrepreneurial spirit and creating this beautiful vision for the future. But that said, the news is really tough. Darin, it's tough. I mean, the United Nations saying Code Red for humanity, there was a global assessment report that said they anticipate if we don't take strong global action, that we're going to have 1.5 major natural disasters every single day that we can expect starting in 2030 because of climate change. So we've got to balance the reality of the news is tough, and we're not on the right path with all this potential, and that only happens with this kind of daily practice of sustainability, in my view.

Darin: That's it. That's it 100%. That's why I'm so excited to meet you and to have this discussion because it's like, okay, burning fossil fuels, making 400 million metric tons of plastic every year, having no clue. Come on, recycling 7%, 8%, 9%, maybe it only has one turn anyway. So recycling really doesn't exist. It's insane. We should put taxes on people that keep making that. There's a lot of that stuff. So my point is that we have to face it, so it's like, yeah, when you hear the real news, I don't even know where the hell the real news is anymore, but when you're in this a long enough and you start going, okay, maybe we should do something different here. You have to face this stuff. Then once you face it, you can heal through it, how do we get here, who's involved, and how the hell do we get out of it change it. And that's where I love your perspective because you're in an area that I have zero



experience in whatsoever. I'm interested to hear from your perspective, like the lobbying and the politicization of things and all of that stuff, it feels so slow. It feels so cathartic. So in my simplified version, I know that that's not entirely accurate but that is what I also being an adventurer and getting my hands dirty all the time in my career, I get frustrated because I feel like people who are in power who can actually make a change are not doing it very well at all. Anyway, that's my rant. So I'd love to hear your response and some of that.

[00:24:05] How politicians can help the environment

Heather: Well, they aren't doing a very good job. I mean, they just aren't, that's why you're frustrated, and it does take forever. Legislation and politics and the system, it is complicated. It's difficult. Obviously, there's a lot of money from fossil fuel industries that are able to manipulate different legislation, how it's written, who does what, how to slow things down. Those same fossil fuel companies are investing in renewable energy. They know their product is finite. They know it. And so they know that they have to harness solar and wind. I think one of the things that you talk about, Darin, that's so important is that this idea of the importance of using common sense. So I think one of the things I say is you have to control what you can control. That's why this idea of a daily practice, I think, is so powerful because, for some people, it may be just making a different choice at the supermarket, whether they're going to buy organic food or not organic food or look at something with low pesticide residue or not. For others, it may be working with an organization to provide clean water for 800,000 kids that didn't have access to clean water before, but those actions build upon each other. But when it comes to influence peddling, when it comes to the challenge of getting climate legislation passed, what I would say is that for all big movements, they take a long time but it's individuals taking that action and then all of a sudden, it feels like a shift. I feel with my whole being we all know we're running out of time when it comes to the irreversible impacts of climate. We know we have the technology and it exists and we can do it. But I think what you're really asking is when does the political will shift. We have to have the political will to get the changes that we need, and I think that only comes when we bring as many people as possible into this movement, help them see themselves in the movement, help them see this positive future, and they demand it, and they demand it from companies too. One of the things we're seeing is in the investment world. BlackRock is talking about climate risk. That's billions of dollars that they're talking about. Universities across the country are divesting from fossil fuels. The SEC, Security and Exchange Commission, has a proposed rule saying that publicly traded companies may have to soon disclose their carbon footprint and what their climate risk is. So this is getting real in important ways that maybe we don't see every day. I mean, we see the extreme weather events, but we don't necessarily see the changes that are happening and the people that you've met with and these top 10 polluters and all that they're doing to try to shift the culture. It will happen because it must, but as far as how do we fix the broken system, my big takeaway, and I talked about this in the book is democracy is not a spectator sport. You gotta get involved, all of us do. And I call my member of Congress, even though we don't share the same values at all, and he has to listen to me because it is his job to listen to me. Even though it's a staffer, and will I change his vote? No, not at all. But will I make sure that people in that office know that the state of Montana is not a monolith? Yes, they will know that.

Darin: Amen to that.



Heather: But I wish I had an easy answer. But I think it really is up to all of us to make that change and do what we can do.

[00:27:20] Beekeeper's Naturals Ad

Darin: Bees harness some incredible benefits to the environment and to our health. Bees are truly fascinating and incredible little insects. Beekeeper's Naturals are a proud advocate for these bees in so many ways, and their sustainable source products offer real safe health solutions derived straight from the hive. Through the power of natural ingredients like bee propolis extract, royal jelly, raw bee pollen, Beekeeper's products provide similar results to what you'd find in your local pharmacy, that's right, but don't force you to compromise your values. Their products undergo third-party testing to make sure that they're free of these modern-day additives, artificial colors preservatives, fillers, gluten, GMOs, and the dangerous pesticides that are everywhere as well as refined sugars. I use their bee propolis throat spray every morning to set me up throughout my day. I love it because it supports my overall health as well as soothing my throat because I am definitely talking a lot when I'm recording podcasts like this. I am completely plant-based and I support insects and animals and everything else, and so I really spent time understanding their harvest methods and how they're actually allowing the bees to thrive better as a result of their caretaking. Beekeeper's main mission is to save the bees. They even donate 10% of their profits to honey bee research, and that is awesome. To improve your health today, Beekeeper's Naturals is offering my listeners 25% off by going to beekeepersnaturals.com/darin or enter code, D-A-R-I-N at the checkout.

[00:29:36] Second Part of the Interview

Darin: The people want the change. Going back, I saw reports where well over 85% of the people have this anxiety, who would definitely make a healthier choice if the choice was available to them. I've worked with nonprofits, I still will, and it's hard. It's a tough scenario. I love conscious capitalism. Conscious capitalism can do so much with the right leaders and the right CEOs and the right people. Yes, we got to make money. That's part of the sustainable model, but you don't have to strip the world and hurt people in the process. That's where I want to continue to focus and continue to support entities and companies. So, what are some of the things that recently have excited you about changes that you're seeing that maybe people don't know about?

[00:30:30] Exciting developments in sustainable brands

Heather: I'm so excited about what we're seeing with sustainable brands. One of the things I do is I have the seven archetypes and then I profile eco heroes that are within those archetypes. So one is Beautycounter, which is a makeup line created by Gregg Renfrew who once he realized that the Food Drug and Cosmetic Act had not been updated for cosmetics since 1938. She realized that there needed to be opportunities for not only companies to create cleaner products, but also drive the change. So her consultants kind of like Mary Kay if you think back to that, but it's obviously super updated with Beautycounter. Her consultants also lobby Congress. So they use their capital and their influence by creating this new brand to actually take action to try to update the cosmetics act and we've seen California update its cosmetics regulation and that's a huge driver. So that's just like one example. I think the



other opportunities what we're seeing with the price of solar just coming down so quickly. I think a lot of people are like look, I don't have \$30,000 to put solar panels on my house, can I still be an environmentalist, does that count? But now we're seeing power purchase agreements, so you can finance. It makes a lot of sense because you'll save over time with solar. So Sungevity, Mosaic, there are all kinds of great companies like that on the market to bring solar, even places to like Montana. So that's just very, very exciting. I also am seeing a lot with sustainable design. I'll say that Rent the Runway, Gwynnie Bee, all these opportunities. I just saw that Lululemon for Earth Day, they just announced that they're taking worn clothing back to try to recycle it from customers, which is awesome. I realized the brands I'm talking about are not like necessarily everyday brands yet, but I think that there's an incredible opportunity when they go to scale. I think the other thing is young people, Generation Z, those born after 1997 expect this. They expect to hear about sustainability, about corporate responsibility with their employers, and I think they're a real driver for that change. I also think this generation is focused on environmental justice and the intersectionality between racism, economic oppression, and the environment and how it all relates. So they're asking brands to really talk more about equity, and what they're doing to bring equity policies to the table. So there's so much innovation and excitement going on in those areas not to even mention, we haven't even talked about regenerative agriculture and just the huge shift we're seeing with soil health. One of the eco heroes I profiled was a woman named Robyn O'Brien, who got really focused on food additives when her kids had an egg allergy. Then from food additives, even though she has an MBA and then worked in capital markets, she now has a soil health fund, where she's trying to help farmers make the transition from conventional ag to regenerative, it's not organic, but regenerative to really focus on soil as to carbon sink. So there are all kinds of amazing opportunities that get me excited every day. But one of the exercises I have in the book that I just feel like is so you, Darin, is in my chapter when I talk about think beyond your age. I talked about watching soap operas with my grandma when I was little, and how much I loved it because my parents didn't really approve, but I got to watch Guiding Light. Then sometimes we watch Days of Our Lives. I talk about Days of Our Lives and like the sands through the hourglass, these are the days of our lives. And in the book, I have an exercise that asks you to think about someone who has created an opportunity for you that changed your life that isn't on this planet anymore. They may be related to you, but they may be even a figure in history. Then I asked you to write those names down. Then I asked you to envision that it's 2050 and you're meeting with a teenager that you are related to, and what are they going to thank you for and what are they going to wish you had known. I think it's important for us and a lot of times when I'm doing book events and talks, I start with that because I think it's important for us to break down all the shame that you were talking about and the polarization and start talking about legacy. What do you want your legacy to be? And no matter where you are on the political perspective, most people, and I'm saying this as someone who is from East Tennessee, spent a lot of time in Kentucky, working in a coal mine, that is really, really hard work, is that necessarily what we want teenagers in 2050 to be able to be doing? We can create opportunities in this renewable, regenerative future that are exciting that our future ancestors, I call them future loved ones, can thank us for. So this idea of being a good ancestor, I think is really powerful, too.

Darin: I love that, the legacy. We have to not only look at legacy in terms of products, what are you buying, where's it going, the delusion of plastic being recycled. Okay, we just unpack



that. We have to understand that and then how are you aligning yourself up with your values? I think exercises like you have in the book are like, we need to do enough stopping to learn a little more ourselves or else we're just reacting. And if we're staring at the news all the time or social media or whatever, we're being programmed. That's why self-assessment and meditation and things that you would-- Listen, you'll wake up one day and you go, what the hell am I doing? Where am I going? Ask anyone listening right now, ask yourself that question right now, and start writing out. Get your book, start figuring out, take a second, take five minutes every day, and just start to cultivate what you really care about. Are you in alignment and in action with what you care about? Because this is it.

[00:36:18] Put your eco-anxiety aside and come as you are

Heather: This is it. It's so powerful, that action. One of the themes I talked about in the book is come as you are. And when you talked about this shame, it's something that I hear about a lot, Darin, I bet you do too. I have friends who are like, "Heather, I want to invite you over, but I need you to know I have Ziploc bags." I'm like, I can still come to your house. Or have a friend who says, "Okay, I just need you to know that my husband has an F-150." Yes, you still can be part of this movement. You don't have to confess your environmental sins to me because that's not how it works. We do have to have this systemic change. We have these opportunities to make better choices. But even if you do have Ziploc bags, of course, we live in modern-day society, I have young people that are like, how can you sell your book on Amazon? Well, because it's 2022 and I want to reach as many people as possible. You're going on a book tour. Well, I've offset my travel through Green Mountain Energy to buy carbon offsets for my airline travel. But there are things that you can do and conversations we need to have or people need to know, as you're making that reflection, like what am I doing with my life? This is it. What is my legacy going to be that if you care about the future, and you care about when I call future loved ones, those people that we are going to love that we haven't met yet that are in our future, we will love them, and we will want to know them, and we want them to have a better life? If you care about that, in my book, you're an environmentalist. You just need to find out how do you apply your strengths in service to this movement with the solutions you're most excited about. So I think that invitation and that openness is what you're all about too, Darin. It's something that's very inspiring, and I think more of us need to do that come as you are.

Darin: Exactly. This whole idea of perfectionism and like, I saw you with a Ziploc bag, or you bought a plastic water bottle in the airport. Well, if they would let me bring-- Listen, there's no way you can get out of it. We're in this, my term of fatal conveniences, we have modernized so much where we're just like, shit, if I could turn off factory farming tomorrow, it'd be awesome, but it would be horrible. It would just destroy the world overnight. It's impossible, you can't do it. But there are steps we can take together with the big companies and do this thing together. It's not perfect, but we all have to move together more. We can be better. Let's be better without judgment.

Heather: Right. And you can also push for the break free from plastic act. We can push for these big, big changes while we're making these smaller decisions. One of the stories that I talked about in the book is climbing Kilimanjaro in the '90s. And there was this group of really ultra-fit British women and they made fun of me and my friends because we were not like in great shape and we took forever to go from hut to hut to hut. They would ask us, how long



did it take you? I was like, I don't even know you, why do you care how long it took me and if I'm slow? What happened is that I reached the summit, the peak, but none of the Brits did because they went too fast and didn't let their body adjust to the lack of oxygen. I use this story because I think a lot of people think environmentalists are this way, like how long did it take you to get to that hut, you don't know the outdoors like I do, you're not good enough, you're not making the right choices, and that judgment keeps people from trying. I think what you're saying, Darin, when you're talking about being good enough and just try to do better, it's like everyone is welcome to try and the trying does count. It's not going to solve the climate crisis. I am not going to solve the climate crisis through my book, but my hope is to create more people in the movement, have them feel like they're welcome, have them show up in a way that's authentic to them in a way that does create that culture shift we need, so we can have the big changes. I think that when we see our role in that context of not like counting our carbon individually, companies are going to have to do this soon, but like counting our carbon like calories, if we start thinking about the intention, almost like a meditation of our act in sustainability, we can create that shift of consciousness that can make the solutions at scale be real.

Darin: Exactly. It's like, listen, you make one choice, you feel better. You start resonating to other people, you start having cool conversations, you have an idea, You run into a friend who knows a friend, you get funded. That's how this works. That's exciting. And especially when you start realizing that when you've aligned your passion and your purpose with a job with the environment, there's nothing perfect, but it's doing less than less harm, and doing more and more and more good, then it's cool. That's how you make shifts. And there are small shifts that lead into looking back at 10 years, look back at five years, look back. Every day if we don't align ourselves and make those small changes, then we're just reacting. Then we're back to that fear model that's kind of probably going to take us as the undertow of the ocean of fear and that doesn't go well.

Heather: This fear is really real, and I think it's up to us, other generations, to let these young people know we can do this and you're not alone. For example, I'll tell you my older daughter, I was talking to her about hey, when you go to college, maybe you might want to get a Masters in sustainability. She says, "Mom, in 10 years, I'll be 26. Isn't that too late?" No, it's not too late, 10 years is not too late. She's like, what about this study, what about that study, what about this study? I said it's not too late. We're gonna need as many people as possible helping these fix solutions, whether it's regenerative farming or whether it's clean energy, whether it's detoxifying all these consumer products where it's going from plastic back to glass or figuring out new materials that are compostable that are plant-based. We got to tackle this all together. These are great opportunities, we're not running out of time, but these young people, so many of them. There is a recent survey of 4-H, which I know that you know that 4-H provokes a warrant in Montana. I didn't grow up in Tennessee. 4-H is a great agricultural leadership program in schools across the United States. There was a survey of 1,100 4-H kids and 85% thought that we weren't doing enough on climate change and that it was going to be a defining moment for their generation, the impacts of climate change. So, I think that this idea of doing what you can as an individual, assessing yourself, finding your role in this movement, aligning yourself with your values, realizing that taking care of the planet is self-care. Leaning into your legacy and getting involved is so important and it does matter because unfortunately, because we've been talking about all these United



Nations agreements, The Paris Agreement, the Glasgow Agreement, and you've said, and these kids see it, you've seen a lot of people fail. You've seen it, they've seen it, Darin, maybe not as close up as you have. I think it's important for us to not only talk about hope, but let them know that we're committed to intergenerational partnership and equity because the young people are going to experience these effects in a way that we haven't if we don't make those big shifts. So, I think having these intentional conversations and this intentional self-discovery and getting excited about the future and what's possible is so powerful, and that's what gives me hope ultimately.

Darin: Totally. It's almost like that fear creates that paralysis in a sense like holy shit. So then she hesitates, even leaning into something because she realizes that that's gonna take time and all of that stuff. Then it's like, no, we have to actually help nurture the opposite. Because listen, at the end of the day, we got to go up or go down swinging. You just gotta do everything we can because again, it's between us and this great spirit and this great nature and God and the universe, and let's just be the best version of ourselves, just let it rip.

Heather: We have to. They're depending on us. Our future loved ones are depending on us to make the right calls now, and we don't know what the right calls are. We have a lot of good science that's telling us what they are, but we know that we all need to get involved. One of the other things that I'll just say, Darin, I think it's important because I had a couple of friends say to me, "Heather, your kids have eco-anxiety because of what you do. Your husband's doing grizzly bear recovery and environmental policy. You've been doing this for 20 years." And I said ask your kids at dinner tonight. My friend did, and her sons, one of the older one put his fork down and said, "Mom, I think about climate change every day. We just don't talk about it around the table." Her younger son said, "Yeah, we're completely screwed, mom. Thanks a lot." I think that creating space for young people to be heard is really important because a lot of people assume it's not necessarily on their minds and it actually is regardless of party affiliation, regardless of upbringing, they know. And they also need to know that we're here and we're going to go up or down swinging. I love that, Darin. We're gonna give it our all and we're gonna do what we can do as individuals and with that, we can create that big shift. I'm just so honored and delighted to meet you and so proud of what you're doing. You're giving it your all, Darin, to show people the possibilities and how exciting and beautiful. I think that's where we lose sight of the beauty that we can create and this idea that it all starts with self-discovery. I think it's very powerful and I'm excited to have that concept in this book, One Green Thing.

Darin: You've laid this out so beautifully for people to have kind of some tools to grasp on to, to help curb some of this anxiety because you're right. You asked people that aren't necessarily in this movement or talking about it, it is in them, around them affecting them, and it's the elephant in the room. That's a perfect example of that, but I think what you reference in that book, that one part where it's like go outside, look up. They get this perspective. We have to connect back. The kids need to connect. I don't wanna be one of those older people that are saying, hey, put your device down but seriously, put it down, get your feet in the ground, get your hands dirty, build a fence, go outside, do something. Just get outside and breathe in this incredible planet because she definitely will kick us off like a bad flea. Anyway, she'll go on. It's just a matter of what we want to do because we're just extinguishing ourselves. That's really what it comes down to and it's like, you're not treating me



all that well and I'm a lot bigger and stronger than you. So, if you wanna keep doing that to yourself, fine, then it's on you.

Heather: It's so true. And for folks who are suffering eco-anxiety, that's the first thing obviously, if it's interfering with daily life, you go to see a professional for sure, but time and nature is a great way. Forest bathing is another way, people talk about it. Just spending time without your devices. Just like you said, putting your bare feet on the ground, looking up, being present. It is healing. It's a powerful force for healing. What's so interesting is spending time outside with what we're trying to protect can help us deal with the anxiety about protecting it in the future. I mean, it's a beautiful connection. And I love that your theme too of this is it. We have to do all that we can each day and be better. Be kind to ourselves, be compassionate to others. Another big theme I have is compassion and community connection, and I feel like you're always focused on building that community connection. But one of the things about the digital age and post-pandemic is that a lot of our community connections have been attenuated. We need to build those because we're gonna need them to deal with natural disasters as you have experienced. But we'll also need them for our mental health and for the success of the planet for sure.

Darin: Yes, find your tribe, man. Lean on your friends, lean on your family. If family of yours or certain friends aren't awakened, you'll find your people. Find your people and there are people just like your kid's friends at the table. The conversation that's had, you will find out more of what's really going on for all people, so that's what we have to illuminate. We just need to bring all of this stuff up so that we can actually then deal with it effectively.

Heather: Absolutely.

Darin: Well, thank you so much. Let's stay connected for sure. I wanna know what's going on there'll be an influx. I wanna be able to have a place where I can continue to point kids to go to and I say all people really because it's all of us.

Heather: I think it's neat too, Darin, that I watch it with my daughter. So this idea of like families watching your show together is pretty cool too because we had some great conversations about Iceland. When you went to Iceland, we had so much fun talking about geothermal energy. I mean, it's neat, so I would love to follow up with you. I can't wait to hear about your book. If there's any way I can support you in your research or how you're doing that, please let me know. Thank you for all that you're doing just to raise awareness and give people hope and excitement about the future.

[00:49:44] Podcast Outro

Darin: Thanks for tuning in to this episode of The Darin Olien Show. I hope you took something valuable away from this conversation that will help improve your life in some way. If you'd like to learn more about my incredible guests, you can find all of their information in the show notes on my website. If you enjoyed this episode, or even if you didn't like it, please rate this podcast. The team and I value your feedback so we can continue to give you the most value possible. We want you to get the most out of every podcast. So please rate, subscribe, share anything you feel called to do. I truly appreciate it, and I love and value your support. So, thank you, and I'll meet you in the next episode.