



## Finding Power In Silence | Leigh Marz & Justin Zorn

### **(00:00:00) Guest Intro – Leigh Marz & Justin Zorn**

Darin: Hey, everybody welcome to the show. This is Darin Olien. This is the Darin Olien show. What's going on? How are you doing? What's happening? Creating your life, are you spending time every day, getting clear on who you are, what you are and where you are going and what you want in the world? Well, this episode, we are going to expand the molecules of silence. My next guest, Leigh Marz and Justin Zorn, are incredible people. You will know in my voice how amazing this conversation was. But let me just say a little bit about these two, Justin and Leigh are founders of Austria Strategies, a consultancy that bridges, contemplation and action, helping leaders and teams envision and communicate solutions to of course, complex challenges we all face, and they are the authors of this wildly cool, amazing book called Golden. The power of silence in a world of noise. You all know that our world is noisy and it's noisier and noisier. So, what can we do to expand silence and calm the noise? That's what we talked about; we dove into that. Justin is Harvard and Oxford trained specialist in economics and psychology of human thriving. How cool is that? He has written for many publications, including the Washington Post, The Atlantic, Harvard Business Review. Leigh Marz is a leadership coach for major universities, corporations, and federal agencies. She's a long time student of Pioneering Research and Practitioners for the Ritualized use of Psychedelic Medications or Medicines in the West. She has led and trained many programs, experimental mindset, programs, and teams for NASA decade long cross sector collaboration to reduce toxic chemicals with a good partnership that I am diving into a little deeper called The Green Science Policy. This conversation was riddled with ideas and concepts to allow yourself to find and cultivate space and silence in your head, in your mind, just by that alone, who's thinking, and who's doing the thinking. Who's running the stories, who's running the noise. What are we constantly trying to change out there in order to control inside here, our brains, our moderns? It's the other way around the world out here will always be busy and noisy. How can we cultivate the space and the silence, The Power of Silence in a World of Noise, Golden Space Silence. Okay, sit back, relax. Enjoy The Golden Silence that we talked about in today's episode. I hope you enjoy.

### **(00:03:36) 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 are looking for motivation to take the next steps towards a happier, healthier life, then you are in the right place. And I am stoked that you are here. So, let's do this, this is my show. The Darin Olien Show.

### **(00:04:19) Interview commences**



Darin: I am just so grateful to have both of you. It's kind of cruel to have both of you on, because you are both extraordinary as individuals. And I am just looking at all of these kind of tentacles and places that we could go. I love this topic. I actually started listening to the audio book, love it. So, everyone listening, Golden, The Power of Silence in a World of Noise, best title ever. And if people don't wake up to that, like, holy, it is noisy. I need this. Like, go get the book right now. I say this all the time. I think silence is a superpower and holy shit, it's so noisy in the world. Obviously, both have mindfulness, meditation, all of this stuff. You have been helping high-level people. How did this all start? And then how did it kind of converge with this silence noise kind of thing? How did the book happen? Leigh, why don't you give it a shot?

### **(00:05:28) How did this concept of silence come about?**

Leigh: Well, started from this place of despondent that we were experiencing independently, both of us in our work, Justin on Capitol Hill and sensing the noise and the trappings of point and counterpoint culture and the trappings of more talking and thinking always being the solution more noise, always being the solution. And then for myself, it was similar, but different experience also working on things that felt urgent and important in terms of climate change, working with climate change teams and working with people, trying to remove toxic chemicals out of our products. And feeling a sense that some of the ways we were coming at this with more and more urgency and more and more intensity and more and more that kind of getting out their advocacy and more and more data but that wasn't actually bringing us into a place of solutions, as well as we are both parents of young kids navigating that world in these times. And we were just finding ourselves at the end of what we could do with more thinking and talking and strategizing better, better, faster, quicker, and stronger. So, we came up with this idea, really this intuition hit us both, perhaps the place to turn and to look was in silence. So, we wrote an article for Harvard Business Review, really just a quick little article, looking at silence as a strategy and a place for clarifying our thinking as a place for discerning. What's really true in needing our attention and that article went viral unexpectedly to us and really sent us the signal that there was something to explore deeper and that we would do that together. So, we spent the last five years on that journey, talking with neuroscientists, artists, politicians, activists of all kinds, a man incarcerated on death row, a Grammy-winning opera singer, heavy metal frontman, just all kinds of humans, all deeply devoted to silence and asking them the question. What's the deepest silence you have ever known? And this book is a collection of those stories and those insights that we were fortunate enough to get, to carry forth

Darin: From a story perspective, what a great question to ask the deepest silence you have ever known. There's so much going on in everyone's world that upon asking a probing question can open up, maybe call it the unconscious mind, but it's already there. But when you ask a good question, then this wisdom and this knowledge can come out. And I love that you just kind of splattered on the wall, different kinds of people, because then it's like, okay, it's relatable because there's this theme of human rather than this theme of, oh, it's an academic, oh, it's this certain population. So, I love that. But Justin, how about you? And also, I want to hear how you guys got together working as well.



Justin: Well, Darin, I want to hear from you though a little bit more about what's the deepest silence you have ever known. What comes up for you with this question? Even if it's just first thought, best thought, what's the deepest silence you have ever known?

### **(00:08:28) Darin's Deepest Silence**

Darin: Well, the first one was cotton in my ears, riding a Harley Davidson through the mountains of Colorado and intoxicatingly inside myself. I always say that was my first guru. And then when you unpack it, it's not about the bike. It's not about all of that stuff. You are like, oh, it's in silence, it's the teacher of silence. And then of course, through my life of significant moments of 4 days, 4 nights, 96 hours doing the Hanbleceya vision quest in the mountains of Colorado, having Ayahuasca experience 22 years ago, those kinds of things. But those are off the top of my head. There are two million more.

Justin: I love that you are going right into its Darin too, with like you asked about how we met and the essence of this, and Leigh mentioned this feeling of, she uses this word despondency and it's true was like the origin of this book was like, what are we going to do about this crazy world? Like, how are we possibly going to bring more sanity? And the answer to us that came was like a little bit what you are describing being in that Harley or what you were describing in that vision quest or in that Ayahuasca experience, like moments of pristine attention. Like how do we tune into these moments of pristine attention, where there's an awareness that's not just beyond the noise and distraction of the everyday world, but something that's a polar opposite of that. These places of pristine attention, where we could tune into to what's true. We could tune into like what we really truly need in our lives. And we could tune into a higher level of inspiration, a finer perception, because the problems we are facing, you know, as you explore in your show, the challenge is health-wise, ecologically, you name it. It's like all this demands a higher order of thinking and feeling. It demands a refinement of perception and how are we going to refine our perception if we don't get beyond this crazy noise of this world right now.

Darin: Dude, I love that. It's like on the one hand, it's the opposite. So, it's like create more noise, do more, figure it out, create a list, get doing, you are being lazy. We are so good at noise and that noise becomes an addiction. That noise becomes a distraction after distraction and layers and layers of distraction with this delusion that we are doing something about X, Y, and Z, but people are listening to it and they are still going, what the hell are we talking about here? How do we then dance and develop the immense pristine silence? How do we start to calm down the noise? How do we start to integrate some of this stuff?

### **(00:11:22) So, how do we silence the noise?**

Justin: We could think about; I want to get into so much of this silence and social justice, this dance. I love to use this word dance between action and contemplation, the practical work of how we are actually able to make this happen. And one thing that's coming up for me too, is to just start by saying, you know, what is noise? What is silence? Leigh, you want to speak to that a little bit? What is noise?



Leigh: Yeah. Just to start us off with some so yeah, so we have some handrails here. Noise, we are looking at as unwanted distraction with that, which is pulling us in different directions from our true intention, from what we want to perceive and figure out for ourselves or the way forward. So, it's unwanted distraction and we look at it at the auditory level that, which is usually assaulting our ears and sometimes our nervous systems, our moods, emotional state. And there's just an enormous amount of evidence that that type of noise is exponentially on the rise. So, all kinds of studies demonstrating that, and I know you and your listeners just know that, you just feel it. So, then we look at informational noise on this that the mass proliferation of mental stuff that is coming at us through our devices. And just as available is also exponentially larger than any time before in history. And that really drove us to look at attentional capacities. How much actually of this information can we take in? The answer is no more or very little more than hundreds of thousands of years ago. So, we are totally at a cap as human wise. You know, our attentional capacities are capped and yet the amount of information coming at us is just rising, rising, rising for all sorts of reasons, which we will get into later, just sort of the systems behind that. And then also our internal noise we look at that was just existing in our internal landscape in our minds, our self-talk, our thinking about the future, our rumination about the past, our worries, our anxieties also through the roof. So with teens, young people, and then everybody, this is a crisis. One professor that we turn to is Ethan Cross at university of Michigan, who estimates that we have something like 320 states of the union addresses going through our mind. This is of condensed internal speech, every day, 320 internal state of the union addresses just yammer, yammer, usually not very helpful, right? We are not present to what's happening. So, this is how we look at noise. So, we are interested in the sound and the decibel levels. And we are interested in the bits of information that is usually, how that's measured. And we are interested in that internal area, which is actually holds a lot of mystery and is very interested. We talk to neuroscientists and we look at spiritual traditions, and all kinds of places to inform and unpack that. And then Justin, maybe I will have you take on silence.

Justin: Yeah. I mean the flip side of this too, at the heart of this book, really, isn't just, what is noise? We explore this exponentially rising problem of noise, but what is it that we want? What is this silence that we seek, not the silence of censorship and oppression, but the silence that we seek at one level, it is the absence of the noise that Leigh was just talking about. You know, it's the absence of that unwanted interference, that unwanted distraction in our ears, on our screens, in our thoughts, the silence is the space where no one is making claims on our consciousness where there's nothing interfering with our perception and intention. But then there's also like through all these interviews that Leigh was describing with neuroscientists and poets and activists and politicians and someone on death row, we realize something else that there's also this other level to silence. There's this other meaning that isn't just the absence of noise. It's a presence unto itself. And people experience this presence, not just in ostensibly quiet spaces like you were talking about during with the Harley, but people experience it in births and deaths and moments of awe. The 4:00 AM mark at an all-night dance party were running the perfect line through roaring rapids. It's this subjective and diverse experience, but the common denominator, if there is one is when we stop talking to ourselves about ourselves, it's when we give up that self-referential thinking some call it the flow state. We call it just tuning into this pristine attention where we could feel it like a presence holds us, heals us, renews us, inspires us.



Darin: So beautiful, it's so interesting when you actually talk, even talk about the noise, how much noise there is, right? It's like, of course from the direct audible, but then there all of the intangible noises. And then you can even kind of make an argument of the noises on our bodies with those invisibles, like the PFOS and the endocrine instructors. It's just an assault all the time. But then when we look at that, which I fully appreciate and love, which is why I think it's just this tool, this way, underutilized tool, that silence from my perspective is so full. It feels like our culture, our society is flying down one path like sprinting to your point, not even close to adapting to it at all. And yet it's just piling on more and more and more and more. And yet maybe there's more, I would like to think there's more people kind of pushed so far that there's an awakening of space or change or difference. And I think your timing of this through COVID and through kind of the pressure of society that we have gone through, what now is our choice, because we need to explore this space and this silence. So how do we turn down the volume of noise and turn up the volume of silence?

**(00:17:45) How do we turn down the volume of noise and turn up the volume silence?**

Justin: You know, we explore this question, how do we turn down the noise? How do we turn up the volume of the silence in a few ways, like the personal way and the community way, the family opportunities we have? And then we look at society as a whole. The space between the notes is the music Bootsy Collins from P-Funk said, that's where the funk is the space between the music, the empty spaces. And there's this Japanese concept, an ancient Japanese aesthetic concept called Ma, which is what's unspoken, the negative space, the empty space, the space, the word Ma means golden sunshine pouring through the slats and the gate of a temple and mom means pure potentiality. It's the space between notes and music, the space between words exchanged and conversation. It's this empty space in artwork and kind of the common denominator to all these different approaches we look at is how do we appreciate Ma? How do we appreciate the silence in between because we didn't write a book for people who want to run away to monasteries to find silence? Like that's not all that interesting to us. It's like in this extraordinarily noisy world we are living in, how do we tune into this pure potentiality, this abundance that's within the silence, that's all around us. Leigh, you want to speak to kind of the personal and I will get into the societal bit.

Leigh: Yeah. So, we turn to a teacher we have actually mentioned not by name yet, but Jarvis Jay Masters, who's incarcerated on death row for a crime that the preponderance of evidence. And we certainly believe shows that he's completely innocent and he needs to be released. So, his case is on appeal for people who want to look into that freejarvis.org is the place to look into that case. But he's a profound teacher of Tibetan Buddhism and a profound teacher of just how to find silence in the most horrifically loud of environments. And we look at the auditory noise, of course, in San Quentin. When we are speaking with him on the phone, it is raucous, just this hooting and hollering. And there's a mix of sound and lofi radios and party beats and whatever else is going on bouncing off of this cement and steel bars and mesh wire and things. And it's pretty hard to just even get through a conversation in those environments, much less like clear thought. But then there's also this anxiety in the mind of your case on appeal and all of the trauma that is reverberating through that space and through men like Jarvis himself. And so how do you navigate that? So, we turn to him as our teacher, he teaches us about what he's found is in his fear of control and his fear of



control by the way is obviously there's not a lot in his control. He has to be in that cell for 23 hours out of a day. Then what is in this sphere of influence? What does he have some influence over and maybe can work with versus what is out of his control and therefore he should let go and release into. So, he takes us through all kinds of meditations, including like his own journey of initially sitting down for meditation. And he does lots of practices outside of meditation, but he talks about how he used to sit down in a cell and it seemed like the men would get so loud just as he was sitting down to meditate like what's with that. How do I know I am trying to meditate here? You know, that was his experience, but he came to understand that his responses to the noise is what needed quietening. That that's where the work was. And so, he takes us into different ways to find that like he does through studying astronomy and through exercise in his cell and through all types of different practices. So, there's this in your individual that tends to be the experience of silence. A lot of times we collapse, silence and solitude. And while that is a place where we can have some more control is how we are with ourselves. We are also interested in how we are with each other. How are we in relationship? Is there a way we can share silence more? Because silence is magnified when it's shared, we have found. So, whether that's in romantic relationships, families, or friends or workplaces where it's hard to think straight, you know, in these open office environments. And so how can we have important, meaningful conversations about silence and giving us opportunities to have more deep work and connect with the experience that we are in, perhaps without all these distractions. And then yeah, we do open out into a society and some of the policy regulation things we can look to.

Darin: The thing that pops up for me is maybe other people are thinking about it.

### **(00:22:25) Silence can be scary**

Darin: Have you explored? Why do people run from silence? They are definitely afraid of it. It's like if you are sitting with someone, especially someone who is new, you just met them. It could be business; it could be romantic. It could be a date, whatever, but oh my God, we are addicted to filling this space. What is that? Why is that happened? Why are we so needing to fill space and actually avoid this incredible opportunity

Justin: I love that question, Darin. That's like one of the prime questions we get into in the book. Can I guide a little thought experiment? Maybe we think of it more as a feeling experiment. Imagine for a moment that you just committed to spending the next five years of your life in total silence. Now there's no need to take care of any logistics, no concern about how you are going to earn a living or provide for loved ones or any of that. All the practical arrangements have been made where you are going to spend the next five years of your life in silence. What's your first thought what comes up for you?

Darin: I have to say that very, very, very first thought before the bunch of the other thoughts come in was relief. And then quickly after that is I am bummed. Because it's connected to, call it a story, call it a thing of the things that I want to help change in the world. If I am in silence, how can I do that? So that's just the mental part of it. But the first part was a relief, like a deep breath internally.



Justin: We asked this question because there was a guy who lived about 2,500 years ago named Pythagoras who you might remember from middle school, math class. He figured out that way to get the long side of a right triangle. And he was one of the most genius people probably to ever live on this earth. He invented like such an extraordinary list of innovations and was also a spiritual teacher, but you know, invented things that are still used in our middle school, math textbooks. And he required all of the members of his inner circle of students to spend five years in silence if they wanted to study with him, obviously that that would be a tall order these days. But I guess an ancient Greece that worked. But like for us, we don't recommend that anyone do this for sure. But we ask this question like how would five years in silence change the architecture of your mind? And some people are like you Darin and I feel this a little bit too. Maybe it's because I have two-year-old twins and a five-year-old. There's a little bit of like feeling of like relief in my nervous system, because I am in a moment of life where I am just constant, ah but obviously, I would miss them a ton, but it's just like for some people there's that relief for other people. There's that immediate feeling of being bummed. Because obviously I would feel that too missing my family and the work and the world, but as people really get into periods of a lot of time in silence and this can also be condensed time in silence as with a lot of psychedelics and entheogenic experience and antigen experiences. There's often like facing a vast silence, even if it's only three or four hours. It's like the common denominator to almost everyone's experience is as you alluded to, it's scary. And we are like, why is it scary? Like what's so scary about silence. There was a study in 2014 at the University of Virginia where a social psychologist left undergraduate student volunteers alone in a room with no cell phone or entertainment for 15 minutes. And they had a choice of whether they could sit in silence alone or push a button that would administer a very painful electric shock. And at first all the participants said they would pay money to avoid the painful electric shock. But in the end 67% of the men and 25% of the women chose to shock themselves rather than sit in silence for 15 minutes. Like that's how scary it is.

Darin: Like holy shit that's unbelievable. The

Justin: Why is that? You know, when we go back to like hundreds of years of philosophy on this because Nicha described what he called the Horror of Vacui. The horror of the vacuum that is silence and we found this like this really fascinating Swiss writer and philosopher just after World War II, who was describing silence as this like basic phenomenon of reality that cannot be replaced by anything else, cannot be exchanged with anything else. He said, there's nothing behind it to which it could be related except the creator himself, which is to say, he said that it's this encounter with this basic fundamental level of reality, that when we really face the silence, the only result is trembling because the ego, you know, as our friend, someone we interview Rochi Joan Halifax, the Buddhist teacher, she says a condition to self the ego rattles and scratches, because it's like, you are up facing the abyss. If you ask a 15-year-old, 16-year-old about their biggest fear, it's like being in a room with someone, with nothing to say, and it's almost a microcosm of that same thing, but there's the added level of how am I being judged? How am I performing here? You know? So, there's a lot of levels to it. We could go on and on about this. But one of our favourite subjects is why silence is scary?



**Caldera Lab Ad:** If you are someone who struggles to find skincare products or a routine that actually works is healthy for you, then you are certainly not alone. I was in that same boat all my life, literally until I found Caldera Lab. No joke. When it comes to the skincare industry, we are constantly let down products are marketed to be good for us, but they are certainly not. And they are not using clean ingredients. There are very few companies that are making products for your skin that are actually there to improve the health of the skin and made with completely clean ingredients. And Caldera Labs is one of them. I have been using their products for now over a year. And if you know me, there's no way I am putting unhealthy anything on my skin. I love getting outside every day, soaking up the sun, riding around the property with chaga on my side. So, Caldera's products make sure my skin gets the absolute attention it needs at the start of the day and at the end of the day, accommodating my lifestyle. My favourite part is they are hand harvested wild botanicals that go into the product. So, when I come in contact with a company that is doing it correctly like that, with what they are using and what they are harvesting and how they are using it for their products, you bet I am using that product. They offer a small range of products. It's not overwhelming and it makes it easy for you to set up a whole routine, quite powerfully for healthy, vibrant skin. And if the idea of a whole routine is too much for you, I get it. Then you can go with my favourite product of theirs. Its multifunctional serum called The Good, which leaves my skin feeling amazing. To try Caldera today, you can get 20% off when you head to [Calderalab.com](https://Calderalab.com) and that's C A L D E R A L A B. C O M and use the code Darin, D A R I N.

Darin: This construct of what we perceive ourselves to be, this construct of our ego, making the, who am I? What am I? How am I perceived? Oh my God, this protects, protect, protect, construct all of the stuff. And it can't exist in the science or certainly it just starts crumbling immediately, which is also extremely incredible and exciting. And without borders, without form, without any clear function. But yet if you are so trapped into this illusion that this is me and this is that and right, and wrong and good and bad. And as you just talked, it's like, how the hell is it not scary to those people? Because it's the end of that. So, talk to me about that again, the exploration of silence and then what it's, I am kind of laughing, but what its benefits seem to proliferate out into.

### **(00:31:50) How to incorporate more silence into your life?**

Justin: It's funny, we have been doing a lot of podcasts that are very kind of like business. What can silence do for you oriented? But after writing this book, it's kind of like paraphrase JFK. Our feeling is like, that's not what silence can do for you, but what you can do for silence

Leigh: Yeah, we are just here to server together. We are just partners to do this work and just to serve silence. That's what we are here to do, but it's important probably to distinguish some things about silence. And I think we are in that terrain where we are not talking about the silence of complacency, that apathetic silence, that I am not going to speak up or even the silence of being stonewalled and shut out the silence that is violence. So, we speak to all kinds of activism that has happened over the years where, whether it's act ups, work and LGBTQ plus world or feminism and looking at using our voices and all of that is true and important, or even the environmental movement and looking at that's the Rachel Carlson's





work and her bravery to speak up in that space and her unwillingness to be silent. But we turned to the leader like Gandhi, who took every Monday as we did this research, it was just phenomenal. He took every Monday in silence, not speaking on Mondays, still engaging in meeting, still taking visitors and things, listening deeply in order for him to discern what was really true and what was the right course of action moving forward from there. And that's the type of silence that we are interested in the other types, feeling more born of the world of noise, more born of that other kind of factors. Even when we take the scientists and chemists and business leaders who are interested in removing toxic chemicals or academics and NGOs out into the redwoods to contemplate things that's to step out and to really, okay. We have 80,000 largely unregulated chemicals in our products. How in the world do we get away from a whack of mole strategy of band one chemical, get its regrettable substitute over and over and over again, a game of whack-a-mole we have to step back. We have to be quiet. We have to take notice in order to come up with a different strategy. And that's the work that Green Science Policies has been doing. And with the six classes, they came to that solution. Let's talk about these as families of chemicals, not 80,000, trying to chase them around. They came to that in deep silence in the Redwoods. And they have been working on that ever since.

Justin: And I am just thinking with your question and it's an important question, you know, what can this do for us in our lives? And I think what Leigh's speaking to here, this word that keeps coming up for me is Leigh speaking is discernment the capacity to discern what's true. And this is something within ourselves discern what's true within ourselves, discern what's true in the world. We spend a good portion of the book exploring what science and medicine, what neuroscience in particular does say in concrete terms about the effect of silence on our physical health, on our nervous system, on our brains and bodies. And we go on a whole journey around that for us, it was a fascinating journey. And we learned a lot about how, for example, Florence Nightingale, 150 years ago in the midst of all of this death and stench in horrible conditions in a hospital, treating soldiers in the Crimean War, prioritized amid all of that horror, prioritized the noise, dealing with the noise because she said noise could be the cruelest absence of care against a person sick or well, and what she was pointing to is that the noise, as we are describing this unwanted distraction drives the fight or flight response, which in turn denigrates our body's capacity to heal. And, you know, we could take this same line around noise as stress, really all the way up to this level of higher cognition of discernment of our capacity to find new solutions because we need silence in order to discern true into certain true intuition. You know, intuition's kind of a funny word; it can sound a little bit, woo-woo. Sometimes, but there's also an element to it where neuroscience is really validating that there are levels of perception and intention that we can access. When we get beneath the ordinary mind.

Darin: These are such incredible topics and areas to pull open, to expand into because this is like the fabric of ourselves. We can have our feelings affected every day, our feelings hurt or whatever, and then we react and then it's to use your analogy is kind of whack able right? Because I find myself too, like getting some sort of business or reacting or emotional. You just want to boom, react and defend yourself. And it's like that doesn't create any healing at all. What can we do to kind of start cultivating more of this space?



Justin: First step is appreciating it, is appreciating what we were talking about before of Ma. We do think of this as a political book in a lot of ways, insofar as we are saying that we are living in a point and counterpoint culture, there's dialectical dance of human life. That's like affirming, denying progress, resistance, boom, bust Obama, Trump, it's just like point and counterpoint; point and counterpoint. And we ask in the book, it's like, are we doomed to endure as Winston Churchill supposedly said just like one thing after another, in this like point and counterpoint culture, or is there the possibility of something more spacious? Is there the possibility of an opening or like this grace of reconciliation? And that's what this book is about. What's about like, how do we tune into this space beyond thinking or talking? And one level to it is appreciating the Ma like we say, giving up one of life's most pervasive responsibilities, which is having to think of what to say. It's like, if we could just like give that up for a little bit. And again, as Leigh was talking about with social justice before this isn't the same thing as not talking or not taking a stand on what we care about, because what we get into in the book is like so much of the injustice in the world actually results from like a so called silence of what we call like closed lip complacency, but the refusal to perceive and address what's wrong in the world is the polar opposite of clear perception and intention. When our eyes and our hearts are open, when there's the space in our consciousness to really pay attention, then we can't be self-satisfied to just look elsewhere. That's when we can be really skillful and attentive to what needs to change, like what you are talking about with toxic chemicals or many other issues. It's like, how do we approach what's wrong in the world from this space of clear perception from this space, even beyond the thinking or talking.

Darin: And then from that solution based, because I think we divorce ourselves. When we get out of that deep connection, we divorce ourselves from nature. We talk about regeneration, great, Paul Hawkin, regeneration draw down all that stuff. It's like, but if you look at the biggest problems we have, we have bought into the whack-a-mole and we have gotten ourselves out of the rhythms and the flows of nature. I am just like getting this information like now it's like, duh, like this space is nature. This space knows exactly what to do to be in harmony with itself because there is no separation period. The primordial soup is permeated throughout all space and time and anything we do that goes against that. It's just going to have consequences after consequences, after consequences. So, it's like cultivate that space inside step back. I love that you brought those people out to the redwoods and I love to take every top political, maybe scare the out of them, right? Get them present with some adventure. Let's all sit in nature. What would happen, man? What would happen? Get out of the capitals, get out of the things. Literally go in nature, take off your shoes and let everyone sit around a fire.

Justin: I am glad you posed that question. What would happen? Because that's actually the conclusion of this book. Like we asked that question, like what would happen if we all really tuned into this like abundance within the silence and a big answer is that we would stop mistaking stress for aliveness. A big answer for us is that we would change our, the meaning of progress as a culture. Because right now the way we measure GDP, for example, isn't just how much industrial stuff we are producing. It's how much sound and stimulus we are producing too. You know, if you take a pristine forest, it doesn't count as anything if you preserve it for GDP. But if you cut it down to sell the lumber at Home Depot, then that counts



as a positive for GDP. But you can say the same thing about pristine human attention. If human attention is preserved, if this space that we are talking about this luminous golden space is preserved. That's zero in terms of GDP but if you chop it up and get it as eyeballs on a Facebook page to sell advertising revenue or get someone to answer emails at 11:00 PM, interrupting the unproductive activity of rest, then that counts as productivity that counts as GDP growth, which in turn counts as progress as our society, which is totally nuts. But the thing is like, there are ways to change that. So, the question you asked, like what if we could get people to just be in this space of silence? Decision makers to actually do it. Like I worked to many years in Congress on Capitol Hill, was legislative director for three members of Congress. And at the time I was also teaching meditation. So, I had a couple of experiences where we just get a room of policy makers to just sit in silence for 20 minutes together. And it was wild man, because at first you would get in that room and even if everyone was silent, you would feel how loud it was inside of everyone's consciousness. And then by the end of those 20 minutes, it's not like any special, you know, magic of a mindfulness practice, but just being in silence together, you can notice that start to diminish as we start to listen, to tune into nothing, to the silence.

Darin: Well, then the boundaries start to waiver, the boundaries start to fall away, this Democrat and that Republican, oh that just starts falling the construct that is perpetrated every day, call the science of mine, right? It goes both ways. You start building a construct and trying to keep that in place. And then you go into that science and watch that stuff kind of wavier and fall away and realize, oh we have more in common than we have separate. And that's fricking beautiful that you were able to do that. Did you see any major shifts from their views of the world in your little view of that?

Justin: No, because it is, it was momentary, you know, it was yeah, not, you know, obvious, but we have our positions on things like toxic chemicals and climate and all these things. And like we don't want to say that the silence is going to be a panacea. Like we are immediately going to encounter silence because there are real differences and there's wrong and right, you know, policy too and all that. But like we just feel like, I mean, Darin, like to what you are saying, you know, with the noise of Golic positioning right now, this silence is a prerequisite to doing anything. A lot of what's happening in the psychedelics world right now is really interesting with this too, as it's becoming more mainstream because people are accessing, including people in positions of power sometimes now. States have vastly expanded awareness, which is tremendously scary for many of those people and can be healing, but it's like, how does that work in the same way? Like those expanded states of awareness and psychedelic states, those on their own are not a panacea. People still need to do the work of getting comfortable with the silence.

Leigh: Part of where we focus the reader and is really on getting very, in addition to appreciating silence and quiet as we experience it. And this is really key. That silence is a quiet is what people think quiet as it's a subjective experience it's based on your experience. So, it's really important to tune into what is actually bringing you quiet. Maybe it's that auditory quiet that you are reveling in; in the moment, but maybe it's that focused flow state kind of quiet you were describing on your motorcycle or in NISCO or in other experiences. And it's really, we are inviting everyone into this exploration of what truly brings you quiet,



because that's where you will find it. Right. And we do that by sensing the signals in our bodies, in our minds, in our relationships and the way we are engaging in the world, where do we notice? We might feel some constriction, some contraction, that's a good signal of noise, a neuroscientist Jud Brewer pointed us towards, or where do we feel expansion? What do we feel that sense of quiet spaciousness, that being the other side? So just taking that simple study of appreciating quiet, you are quiet, your particular style, little doses, bigger doses, that kind of thing, but what really brings you that expansiveness versus at what point are you actually generating more noise or engaging more noise? And sometimes that can be, and this is confusing, what it is sometimes that can be over really important, urgent matters. But if you are adding to the noise, we would invite you to just take a step back and connect back to that quiet and silence and then kind of move from there.

Darin: Yeah. It's like that less reactive impulsive space the times in my life where I have taken that time. And I kick myself all the time when I don't step into that science, because it's this intelligence that's beyond our minds don't get there. Our perceived mind, doesn't get to go there. Right? And that's the invitation that, you know, it's easy to get kind of wrapped up into all of the stuff and all of the things, but it's like we have to train ourselves not to always react to those same patterning's. Right? It's an interesting thing when people have done things the way they have done for so long and now doing things differently and going, wait a minute, I need to defend myself. I need to do this thing. I need to whatever, but maybe there's an opportunity here. And do you have instructions as to ways that people can weave in practice of basically just like stop signs.

**(00:47:30) Small moments of silence can be huge.**

Leigh: They are just like that. Actually, we start with a healthy successor to the smoke break because we notice I am an ex-smoker that used to be my primary way to find quiet in a day, working in crisis shelters and runaway shelters for young people, it was a pretty reliable way to find quiet, to connect it to my sensory experience, maybe to sit with others and talk or not talk. It was a beautiful thing in that way and of course I quit and should have and all that. But when we gave up smoking, we gave up quiet so how do we do some healthy version of that? What does that look like? Can it be stepping out into the raise of the sun for a moment just to connect with the sounds of nature of the birds and the wind. Like I hear in your background, which is so lovely, even a momentary connection to that can help us reconnect to silence and taking a breath and noticing the silence that lives between the in breath and the out breath. Just that little moment of silence can be that slight. It can also be inviting or noticing when things kind of don't go our way. And we find ourselves in long lines or massive traffic that we take that as a moment, not to just check our phones and get all frustrated or turn on more content to force into our ears that we actually use that as a moment to be quiet.

Justin: In the book, we explore 33 ways to find silence in our lives as individuals in the day to day, as individuals sometimes in more rarefied rap, silent moments, and then as families as workplaces and then society as a whole different strategies. So, we look for example, at someone we have gotten to know Gordon Hempton, who's an acoustic ecologist who spent years cataloging the most endangered auditory ecosystem soundscapes in the world. He told us that whenever his to-do list gets beyond a certain length, he takes his to-do list for a



hike. He prints it out and he goes to the most remote place, he can get to, you know, ideally a day's travels away from the parking lot, camping, hiking, backpacking. And when he gets there away from the noise of the world, he pulls out his to-do list. After he tunes into the quiet of nature, the sounds of nature. And he notices that in that vantage point, in the silence of nature, he can cross off like half of what's on the list. He goes away for a day and he finds he could get rid of six months or more of commitments because once he tunes into the silence, it's like all that stuff that seemed like it mattered so much. It didn't really matter.

Darin: That's beautiful and then how efficient to be able to do that. There's one thing that I just want to touch on before we go. And I think it's very powerful. One of the, probably the biggest questions people have aside from making more money. And that is what's my purpose? What's my passion? And dare I say for my instinct is that space and silence is probably one of your best bets into understanding your purpose and passion. Do you guys have some thoughts on that?

Justin: There's a quote I just want to share from the mystic teacher Cabear, he says, be silent in your mind, silent in your senses and also silent in your body. Then when all these are silent, don't do anything in that state truth will reveal itself to you. It will appear in front of you and ask, what do you want? Leigh, what would you add to that?

Leigh: Just tell you that this book all along the way, we have continued to attune to the silence to make sure that we are on purpose with this book as this book's humble, servant silence is humble servant here. So, we do keep leaning into the and attuning to this field and feeling that sense of are we attuning to the bigger message and what's important here, are we on purpose for this moment? it feels true. And in this conversation with you, it feels true and that's just that place of constant connection. And also noticing the signals where we might be just kind of veering off, getting into some busy stuff, or we could do a lot that we could make up as useful of service to this book that is actually just adding to noise. And we just try to stay connected to what is really on purpose and in service.

Darin: Well, and that's a beautiful thing. I think of constantly being in touch with silence. It's putting that rudder in the boat and it's a constant kind of attunement and it's not stagnant. I have said that in so many different ways for like constant practice, it's just like getting quiet, asking myself questions and deeply contemplating, where am I? What am I doing? Where am I going? Where am I putting my energy? And if we don't ask as a people, I can almost guarantee we will be deeply unsatisfied. Well, hey, this is such an amazing conversation. I want to end with silence and maybe it's not complete silence, because I am going to put my microphone into the wind, sit with couple minutes of silence. So, everyone, if you are listening to this, if you are driving, if you are doing any of that stuff where it's dangerous, please don't close your eyes or do anything, but sit with us in silence today, right now, as you are listening to this. (silence) Justin and we thank you for sharing silence.

Leigh: Thank you. Thanks for having us.

Justin: Thank you very much. Thank you for having this incredible conversation, a rare but important one that is for sure.



**(00:53:37) Podcast Outro**

Darin: Thanks for tuning into 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 would like to learn more about my incredible guest, you can find all of their information in the show notes on my website. If you enjoyed this episode or even 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 will meet you in the next episode.