



## Is Being an Introvert Bittersweet? | Susan Cain

### [00:00:00] Guest Intro – Susan Cain

Darin: Everybody welcome to the show, this is Darin Olien This is The Darin Olien Show, stoked to have this next guest, Susan Cain. She has affected millions of people's lives. We first talked about her amazing book called Quiet, the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking, what a perfect title. I am an introvert, you didn't know that's why I am in the middle of nature. I need to restore, replenish and build up my battery again when I go out in the world and then I am fully engaged, but being around too many people for too long drains me. So I need to come back in nature, not talk, shut things down, build myself up again. So this is an incredible conversation, an incredible book that we talked about these introverts and roughly 50% of the population are introverts. And we are in this population world where it's like, you need to kick ass and not stop and keep pushing on almost in this extroverted way. But if you are an introvert, that's not how you work, it's not how you roll. It's got a great Ted Talk, the power of introvert, but then we also transitioned into this brilliant book called Bittersweet her new book, how sorrow and longing make us whole, we talked about this stuff. This is very, very important you can tell that I am super engaged in this conversation because I think these are super powers that are sitting here and we just blow them off. We got to move on, we got to get over it. We have got to not grieve long enough or the society our culture tells us not to, or in some sort of way tells us not to. It's just an incredible woman putting words to things that we need to be more aware of. She has inspired millions, she will probably inspire you too. It's a great conversation well spoken, massively thought out and delivered to you so you can have a better understanding of maybe you, maybe your kids, maybe your family members, maybe your spouse, maybe your loved ones, understanding how they operate, understanding how introverts operate and understanding how to grieve and move through the life's challenges with the ability to extract more information and inspiration and life and understanding that life is not happening to you. It's happening for you all the time, always and in all ways. Okay, sit back, relax and enjoy this engaging conversation. The incredible Susan Cain.

### [00:03:01] 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.



### **[00:03:44] Interview Commences**

Darin: Well, Susan what a pleasure; thanks for jumping on here. I love podcasts for this reason to be able to learn from, ask, talk about interesting conversations and that first book, Quiet. Let's just dive into a little bit, because being on the bestseller for seven years, you literally struck a chord, right? And you probably struck something that I feel it's not understood, nor is it exercised enough. So talk to me a little bit about Quiet and then we will get into your new book, but the introversion and that kind of society, not really kind of brushing over things and not really understanding it.

### **[00:04:31] Introverts vs. Extroverts**

Susan: Yeah, okay. So first of all, it's so great to be here with you and I love this medium so much, just like you. I think it's the world's greatest medium. So Quiet is about the fact that a third to a half of the population are introverts, a third to a half. So that's one out of every two or three people you know, it's very likely people you work with or children you are raising or your romantic partner, your boss, your colleagues, whoever it's lots of people all around you. And yet we have a very clear cultural norm that says that the ideal human is quite extroverted, very assertive, dominant, loud, seeking of a lot of company and of a lot of stimulation, even though that doesn't apply to such a large part of the population and what this leads to is a colossal waste of talent and energy and happiness for all those people and for the parents who are wanting to raise them well and their romantic partners and all the rest. And so that's really what the book is about and I will tell you, when I first started working on this book project many years ago, I thought that it was a kind of out there idiosyncratic project that I was doing, nobody was talking about being an introvert. It was a kind of weird thing to talk about at the time guest. Yeah. So I just thought it was for me, a fun project but what ended up happening is the book came out and it just touched this crazy nerve for so many people all over the world, all ages, all walks of life. I was like suddenly floods of letters and interest from people, all of whom were essentially saying the same thing, which is like, oh my gosh, finally, I have permission to actually be who I am and spend my time, the way I want to spend it.

Darin: That's incredible and it's so funny to think that we are in society and we are quote and quote evolved, and yet we are kind of buy into a story. And then you have got half of the population that are in judgment of themselves. It's whatever the story we propagate over and over and over again, to be this or to be that and to be successful. Just so we are super clear, what is the definition of an introvert? Because I am, I know I am, I have to recharge. That's why I am here. Right? I am in nature right now. I am recharging, recharge, recharge, go out blast it, come back, recharge, recharge, right? I know that and I have figured out a way to thrive in this world in that way. So what's the definition and or your definition, maybe it evolved as you wrote this book of an introvert.

Susan: Many introverts are like you who have figured out how to go out and thrive in this world and make it work for them. So there's a lot of kind of pseudo extroverts or secret introverts walking around out there. And I hear from a lot of them, but I actually like the



standard definition that you hear a lot kind of in the pop literature, that it's a question of, where do you get your energy from? And that extroverts get their energy more from like supercharged situations, with a lot of stimulation coming at them and introverts get more energy from where I see you right now. You are like sitting in solitudes, surrounded by the trees you are out in nature. And so it's really a question you can think of us all as having a kind of internal battery that gets charged or drained depending on the situation that we are in. And for extroverts, the battery gets charged when they are in a hyper social situation and for introverts, it gets drained. But then I got a bunch of steps beyond that because that idea of the inner battery is incredibly useful, but it's just a metaphor for what's actually happening physically, which is that we have different nervous systems and the nervous systems of introverts react more to all different kinds of stimulation. And that's why when we are in a big party, let's say lots of people and noise and sound and lights that feels overstimulating quite quickly. Because our nervous system is reacting more and extroverts have nervous systems that react less. And that means that for extroverts, the liability is if there's not enough happening around them, they can quickly start to feel kind of bored and disengaged and sluggish because their nervous system needs more inputs to get to that state of equilibrium. And I think it's really helpful to understand each other that way, but also for self-awareness you start to notice like even for somebody like me, who's an introvert. If I think about it in these terms of the nervous system, I realize that my nervous system is kind of fluctuating throughout the day and sometimes it's craving more inputs to get to equilibrium and sometimes it's craving peace and quiet. And if you start paying attention, you can try to give yourself what you need so that you are at your peak energy all day long.

Darin: Yeah, totally and there's a bunch of thoughts that come into my mind and certainly the governor system governing your own energy system super important. So to bring this conversation out into consciousness, because so much of this stuff is happening unconsciously and then we are judging ourselves based on what we talked about a little bit in terms of the culture like you got to be bombastically flying forward and just achieving, achieving, achieving. And it's like, holy shit but at the same time I have a huge capacity to do a lot of things, right? And I love to do a lot of things, but I have to do them in my own way, right? So I sit here.

Susan: Yeah.

Darin: And I cannot not even leave my property for 4, 5, 6, 7 days, right?

Susan: I get it.

Darin: And feel completely fulfilled.

Susan: Yeah.



Darin: But it's when we understand ourselves and I want you to speak to this, there's a superpower within all of this, right? There's a superpower within understanding yourself and how you operate and then divorce yourself a bit from the lexicon of the conversation so that you can kind of better understand yourself. So talk to me about that, how we can use this and maybe even all the extroverts can understand this. Now if they have introverts working for them or whatever it is. Talk to me a little bit about that and how we can use this to our advantage.

### **[00:11:05] How to Unleash the Power of the Introvert?**

Susan: Yeah, absolutely and I love that you use the word superpower. That's a word that I use also often when I am talking about this and you are saying a lot of things in that question that you just asked, I think you are really making the point that there is no correlation between ambition and effectiveness on the one hand and extroversion on the other hand, and as a culture, we do tend to assume that the ambitious and effective person is the natural extrovert and they might be, and they might not be, as I say, there's no correlation like introverts find all different kinds of ways to contribute it. All different kinds of levels, just like you. So the key is how do you do it? How do you do it your own way? And if you are an introvert, one of the superpowers that you probably have available to you is that you like to and are comfortable with spending periods of time alone. And the reason that's a superpower is that we actually know from all the research on creativity that you can't really do creativity. You can't like think deeply, you can't think originally without being willing to spend time on your own and kind of like divorce yourself from the people around you temporarily Philippe Starck, the great designer and entrepreneur. He said that he would spend every single summer. I think it was like from May through September, completely by himself, like you said, seven or eight days on your property. I think for him, it was three months. And it was because he knew that if he wanted to figure out his original ideas, that humans are so porous, we take in whatever other people are thinking all around us. If you want to be original, you have got to be able to sequester a little bit. And the same thing is true for any kind of deep thought. If you want to get into that state of flow from which deep thought comes, you need to sit down and focus without interruption. So this is the kind of thing introverts are actually really good at and crave and try to arrange their lives usually so that they can get more and more of that time. And in terms of what do we do with our organizations? I think you probably have a life where you have quite a bit of freedom to govern your own schedule, but not everybody has that. So in our teams and organizations, one of the things that we can and should be doing is sitting down as a team and for everybody to think all the individual members to think, am I an introvert or an extrovert? What do I need here? And work out the team dynamics and schedules so that it's working for everyone. So I sometimes hear from extroverts who work, you know, let's say in Pharma Companies or that kind of thing where there's a lot of introverts around. I will sometimes hear from extroverts who feel like, oh my God, my team members are so quiet and I am like dying for feedback, I need to talk to someone and the introverts feel the opposite. So, if we can start having that kind of conversation, you can work out a system where it's like, okay, we all agree that say, every morning we are going to have uninterrupted flow time, no meetings. And I am making this up here but every day at 1:00 PM, we are going to all touch base with each other and check in and give each other's feedback. So you are like making sure



everybody's working at their own equilibrium, but that can't happen until you have the self-awareness and the awareness of each other.

Darin: Yeah, it's so important. Quiet, it's such a perfect title. It's such a necessary aspect to our life that we actually have to cultivate because we all know how bloody noisy and it's only getting worse, right? It's getting more and there's more devices, there's more invisible energies of EMFs and like toxins, every direction, another app, another thing it's exhausting, it's exhausting. And we actually have to cultivate that quiet like I have people working for me. You have people working for you for you like you could kind of tell right. Who are extroverts and introverts if you are willing to look, but also people are misidentify and misapplying themselves too. So it's like, they are twisting themselves up thinking they got to be this when they are really that.

### **[00:15:02] Creating space for self-awareness**

Susan: Yeah, and what I found is that once you create the space for people and make it socially acceptable to talk about boy, do the floodgates just open right up. For example, at LinkedIn, the director of HR a few years ago, her name was Pat Waters. And she started doing this series of brown bag lunches to talk about my book Quiet. And I think at first it was just going to be one brown bag lunch, but it was like standing room only with people like flooding out the door. And so she ended up having to do it over and over again and it became this big thing. And this is what happens over and over like the minute you make it. Okay, people start forming working groups. They start like creating, you know, Quiet at name of company, database and people really want to talk about it. I would say for anybody listening, who's like involved with a company. One of the best things that you could do is find an influential person at the company who wants to be the sponsor of this. Ideally somebody who's an introvert themselves and is respected and someone who can talk about what their challenges have been at the company as an introvert and also what their secret superpowers have been. And once that person goes first, everybody else is going to want to come along.

Darin: It's almost like pandemic was a perfect scenario for all the introverts, right? You are like, oh my God, this is so great. I can be at home; I can work and I cannot have to be around in the office and everything. What did you find with all of that? Was that true?

Susan: Well, you know, it was funny because on the one hand that was very, very true. And I heard a lot of people saying kind of what you just said. And then on the other hand there were studies that were showing that for some introverts, it was actually more difficult because one characteristic that many introverts have is a kind of a discomfort with change and uncertainty. The pandemic is nothing, if not that I think it's a bit of a mixed bag.

Darin: This is a random thought, but I just popped in my head and I want to get your take on it. On the one hand, we all have very interesting. I am not autistic by nature, but I certainly have my routines and my things. If you bump me a little too far in the direction, maybe I do in



some degree, right? And I do, let's just put my head. I do in some degree, but I also have awareness. So again, this just popped in my head, are introverts more inclined to be on an autistic scale than say an extrovert? Or did that pop up anywhere? I am just curious.

Susan: Yeah, I mean, people ask that kind of question a lot and I guess what I would say is it's a kind of Venn diagram where it's not like totally overlapping. So, but if you think of like, one of the aspects of autism is having trouble like reading other people's facial expressions and emotions and social cues and that kind of thing. There's nothing about introversion per se, that goes along with that but it is true that many autistic people are probably more introverted than extroverted not all of them, but many. And what I was talking about before, about how introverts tend to prefer less stimulating environments, I don't mean less intellectually stimulating. It just means fewer inputs that's also true of autistic people. People are just complex, there's a lot of different aspects to it. And then there's a whole other thing that people ask about a lot.

### **[00:18:20] Are Introverts just Shy?**

Susan: And that's the question of shyness and how are these things related? And there are many introverts who are not shy at all, but shyness is much more about the, kind of the fear of social judgment. When you are in a situation where you feel like you are being evaluated, it could be a speech for one person. It could be going out on a date for another person, that kind of thing. That's where shy people feel quite uncomfortable and you can have shy extroverts and you can have shy introverts. So these categories are complicated, but I guess I would say like the work that I do and the work in Quiet and all of that applies to all those different types of people in different ways.

### **[00:18:58] Caldera Lab Ad**

Darin: If you are someone who struggles to find skincare products or a routine that actually works as 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 favorite 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 favorite product of theirs, it's 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](http://Calderalab.com) and that CALDERALAB.COM and use the code Darin D A R I N.

Darin: So, then you wrote this next book, Bittersweet, how sorrow and longing makes us whole and this is so interesting to me. I think you get into grief in all of these kinds of things, because I know for me personally, that healthfully grieving is infinitely amazing, even though it sucks like it's hard, it's sad. It's all of its levels that are beyond your mind, but your being has to go through it with loss and everything else.

### **[00:22:03] Why Grief and Sadness connect us?**

Darin: And I think our culture and I want to hear your thoughts on it. Our culture is just not good at it and we blow past all of these opportunities. So first off, how did this book come about and why did you want to dive into this? Because I think it's brilliant.

Susan: Oh gosh. I mean, thank you. This book came about because, well, I mean, it really started actually with me wondering all my life, why I reacted to sad music, the way I do. And then I found out that many other people do too, which is like, I hear music that's sad, minor key music, love Leonard Cohen. He's my all-time favorite, I dedicated the book to him in fact, I really, really love him.

Darin: That's awesome.

Susan: So, all my life, I would hear music like that and not feel sad at all. What I felt instead was like this giant whoosh of love, like a sense of connection with all of humanity, with the musician specifically, but then with humanity in general. And I was trying to figure out what the heck that was all about. And I started reading about it and researching and finding that there's this whole tradition that I call the bittersweet tradition and you see it in all our religions and you see it in our art and literature. For thousands of years across the globe, across the centuries people have been talking about this and there's this deep understanding that there's something about our grief, our sorrow, our longing that connects us as nothing else can. It is like a deep, deep form of human bonding and you can also say it's a form of divine bonding, but if you want to want to go that way, like if you look at all the world's religions, there's like the longing for Eden and the longing for Zion and the longing for Mecca and the longing for the beloved of the soul. There's this emotional DNA that is the essence of what it is to be human. That we come into this world with a sense of having been punished from the more perfect and beautiful world to which we are sure we belong and all we want to do is get back there. And that's what the whole idea of the garden of Eden is and when you really like, look at what it is that we want to get back to, it's like we want to get back to a state of unity and love. And so, there's something in these emotions of sorrow and longing that are basically like mainlining love. And we don't see that because we are living in this culture that is so much about being cheerful all the time and unfailingly optimistic all the time. And those are wonderful emotions, not critiquing those emotions. I am only critiquing the lopsidedness of our culture that doesn't let in the full range of what it is to be human.



Darin: That's so incredible because you are absolutely right. It's like you are speaking to this elephant in the room of our culture, because as you say that, I think of the things that were really certainly in the United States that bonded us at 9, 11 and then another layer of people in New York and so they just completely came together. Everything dropped, all judgements, dropped all political affiliations for whatever periods time that was and we all came together, we all put flags up. It's almost like we just got over our shit and then to that point where you just said, let's open that aperture up a little bit more. It's like you are wired and it's almost like need to be kind of punched a bit in order for us to truly let go to go, oh, that's me, that's us. We are together in this, let's get over it. Let's love this person. Let's do whatever it takes to help and whatever and why can't we stay there?

Susan: And I think we don't stay there because, well, I mean, first of all, even as the person who wrote this book, I would never say we want to stay in that kind of state all the time. But I also think we kind of like chase ourselves out of that state five minutes after we enter it, because we feel like there's something distasteful about it. And I actually trace this in the book. I go into the whole history of how this happened. But the two second version of it is that like, as we became more and more of a business culture in the 19th century, we started asking this question of if somebody is a success or a failure in business, is it because of good luck or bad luck? Or is it because of something inside them? And the answer we arrived at is it's because of something inside them, which may or may not be true, fine. But then we took it from there to say like, people are either kind of born winners or born losers and this word loser just such an awful word. It literally is just like gone up in usage astronomically over time. And once you start thinking of ourselves and each other, that way, of course you want to do anything, you can not to be the loser. So, you don't want to deal with the emotions of grief or sorrow or longing. You don't want to stay there because to stay there is to feel like and to market yourself as a loser, that's why we have so much trouble with inhabiting these states that could actually be bringing us together, especially like at this time right now when we are so incredibly divided and the only emotional state, we have for talking about what bothers us is the emotion of outrage and anger. Like that's socially acceptable, but the language of sorrow and longing, not so much, I think it would be really useful if we could find some kind of forum where people could just talk about what truly bothers them, separate from any politics, separate from policy prescriptions, just a place where people could tell the truth.

Darin: Amen to that, we both acknowledge how wonderful it is to have a forum where you and I are speaking and there's no one editing us. There's no one telling us and it's kind of astonishing that, that's even in the conversation at all, that we can't have free thought as anyone in speech and whatever. And that's scary to me and now what I hear is like, even really getting to the true what's really going on. We put this facade; I can't even imagine what the kids are going through this facade that everything's cool. Everything's fine and they are freaking suffering like mad because the whole world flipped upside down. They are already having a challenge trying to figure out who they are because that's part of the path of life. And now the foundation for that has just been crumbling every direction and yet we don't





have safe places. It's almost like Susan, have we created a culture? Have we created losing? Have we created this divide so much that a healthy version of being able to let out that shaken up bottle of Coke of real feelings and suffering is just destitute? We just don't have these spaces anymore and that's freaky, how many people are listening? Do you have someone that you can literally talk to without judgment, right?

Susan: Yeah, and I don't know if you remember this, if you felt this way during the early days of the internet. But I remember when the internet first became a thing, it felt like the most amazing place, because it was just a place where you could kind of like type into the computer. What you really thought, felt, experienced, often it needed to be done anonymously like there was no forum for anything else. So, it felt like this incredible explosion of people really telling the truth to each other in a way that we had never had before. And now with the current version of the internet, that's largely been lost. Everything now is, well, it's certainly not anonymous and it's the opposite of that. Everything's about self-presentation and managing your brand and your persona and all this kind of stuff. So, it's sort of the opposite of what that early promise was. So, I do feel like if somebody could figure out a way to create a forum like that, that people actually wanted to go to where they truly tell the truth, not in a packaged-up way, that's what we are actually really craving.

Darin: When the one hand certain part of the culture is sprinting against that whole nature and trying to do whatever and monitor it and control it. And it's like, it does go against our nature because it's inherently wrong to not be able to just authentically be you without harming people, but just authentically go, hey man, I am bummed out, I am sad, I am grieving and where the hell is the space for that?

Susan: Yeah. One of the things that I did in the book, I went back to visit my college Alma mater like 30 years later and I sat down and I talked to the students and I did this because I went to a college where I would say the culture in particular was like extremely shiny in terms of the way people presented. And I was curious to go back later with kind of a reporter's notebook and just be able to ask people what do they truly feel? And I wasn't sure how the students would react like if they would think it was in kind of weird project. But I literally, I sat down with this group of students and literally like two minutes into our conversation, they were completely like pouring it all out and talking about this phenomenon that they call effortless perfection, which is a phrase I then learned that applied, not just to the college I attended, but it's a big phrase in many universities. And effortless perfection it basically means this pressure that the students feel to be thin and attractive and athletic and get very good grades and be super social and socially adept. And to do all this stuff without appearing to try it all has to seem effortless and it's a crazy degree of pressure. And it explains part of this phenomenon that we keep seeing of students who will like die by suicide. And then you look at their Instagram profiles and a day or two earlier, they were posting photos of themselves, all smiley, surrounded by all their friends as if they didn't have a care in the world. And that's the gap that we have right now that we need to figure out how to close. Not because we want to wallow in sorrow or longing, but because we want to



acknowledge what's there and live a full range of human experience and have that bring us together instead of more apart.

### **[00:32:45] The Impact of the "effortless perfection" concept**

Darin: Absolutely, and it sounds like, and that's wildly intense. I feel when you describe it that way for those kids. And it's a microcosm of, I think everybody, right, they are just like pressed into this little college time where they are massively trying to figure out who they are thrown into this high-pressure cooker and you got to get your whole world figured out because also your parents are spending a hundred grand a year, whatever it is. And you have got to be perfect and that is definitely perfectly imperfect, it's impossible. We all do it like in social media and everything else. And it's like, it just press it, the culture has just created this scenario, but again, I believe light and dark and right and wrong, our shadow, our grief. And to your point, it's not hanging out in it per say, all it's looking for is an acknowledgement because you have a feeling, you have a sadness, you have a grief. So, there's constructive ways to move through that vantage point, the insight, the passion. So, talk to me about that because this conversation is so wonderful and what you are bringing up is so necessary that everyone listening can start to do this themselves and apply these things themselves and to acknowledge the pain, the sorrow, the grief, the darkness, whatever it is, doesn't have to rule you, but it can help you. So open that a little bit up and let's talk about that.

Susan: Yeah, the reason that I called the book Bittersweet, I chose that word really carefully because with Bittersweetness is, is it's not like it's only about pain and grief and sorrow and longing. It is about the fact that to be a human in this world is to know simultaneously, always joy and sorrow. So not only sorrow, but also joy; they are both a fundamental part of this human experience and the fact that everybody we know and everybody we love and everything we love best will not live forever. That is part of a human experience but it's also that those things are infinitely beautiful. So, there's something that comes with these truths, these deep truths about the way that joy and sorrow are forever paired and the impermanence of human existence. There's something about that, that's like a gateway to joy and to beauty and to becoming, and we feel this in our bones and you feel it when you listen to the sad music, you feel it when you see beauty in general, there's this tradition that dates back to early mythology, but you kind of see it through the ages of the archetype of a wounded healer is what it's called. The idea is that the precise place in which you have been most wounded is the place where your gifts to heal yourself and to heal. Other people come from and you see this happening. I give a lot of different examples of it. You see it happening in so many different ways. The mother whose child is killed on a highway by a drunken driver, founds mothers against drunk driving. And the wake of 9, 11, as you were talking about, was living in New York at the time. Not only did people in the city come together, but there's suddenly a whole increase of applications for people to be firefighters. Because it's like the, the exact place we were wounded that's where people want to go and heal.

### **[00:36:08] Joy and sorrow are always paired**

Susan: This is what human beings do and what it means is that the next time you are wounded or as you are considering a wound you have suffered in your past from which



perhaps you haven't yet recovered. The fact that you were wounded, the way you were tells you that that is an area of your life, that you care about the most. And so, what you can do is like commit to that area of your life. And that's the best way to heal. There are so many inspiring examples of this. I really do think that the lesson of this bittersweet tradition is that we are all going to face pain at one time or another and we kind of have two choices. You could either like bury the pain and then you end up taking it out on yourself or other people you just do, or you can be with the pain and then try to transform it into something else. And that's what artists and healers have been doing for centuries.

Darin: What's the paradox too, t's like you feel pain, no one in their right mind wants to turn into the pain. You want to avoid the pain, right? So, it's easy to kind of sprint, oh no, no, no. And you can talk about emotional pain. You can talk about someone dying. You just don't want to deal with it. You have a history of watching movies and us all different ways that people are quote and quote, dealing with pain. But that's why, and you are illuminating it in terms of this happened. This situation happened and I have feelings and sorrow and grief and anger and resentments and like whatever's going on? It doesn't go away. It manifests in some way, what are we going to do with it? How are we going to understand it? What are we going to cultivate? Maybe when it's raining, we are going to develop a way to capture the sun when it comes back out. It's that kind of transmutation that is just neutered in this world. So, from your perspective, what would you do now that could help maybe as an individual and also as a massive collective, what can we do to open this space back up so people can see and find and discover that this is a human thing. What can we do to cultivate a better relationship for these Bittersweets?

Susan: One of the things I talk about in the book, it's a way of summing all this up in a way that's quick, but also in a way that's action oriented, which is whatever pain you can't get rid of make that your creative offering. And I am using the word creative there in a very broad way. I don't only mean paint a painting or compose a song. I mean, like just create something, something of value in this world for you or for somebody else and make your pain, the source of that. And also, to understand that many of our pains have to do with the loss of love in one kind or another, whether it's a bereavement or a breakup or someone you thought you could trust who loved you, ended up to abusing you. It's some kind of failure of love in one way or another. And one of the great insights that I came to through all this research, I have kind of like been following the trail of this tradition, thousands of years of it, the insight is that the love that you mourn, the love you lost, it probably is not going to return to you in the form in which you lost it. The person who you lost to death is not going to come back, but love itself comes back in all kinds of different forms like love itself is just a field and you can enter that field again. You know, you can sail down that river again, if you are open to it in different forms. And I think that's also like a tremendously liberating realization for people who have withstood big failures of love.

Darin: That is one of the most beautiful insights I have heard in a very long time, I love that. And I love how you articulated that, you know, in writing this book, I can't imagine the recapitulation this has put you in for your life.

**[00:40:22] Make your pain your creative offering**

Darin: What was one of the things that you were able to heal through writing Bittersweet and you were able to kind of, you can get as personal as you want doesn't matter. But what was one example for you as you are diving into this, that you were able to transmute?

Susan: Oh yeah, I wrote about a bunch of these things and the one I am about to tell you about, it's such a long story that hard to kind of tell it all now. I can write it better than I can speak it, but I will just say I had a very complicated relationship with my mother during childhood. It was a kind of garden of Eden perfect relationship. My mother is an incredibly warm and loving person and we were as close as two human beings could possibly be. And then when I entered adolescence for long and complicated reasons, its kind of all fell apart. And although for the next decades, after that, we were still in touch and still saw each other at holidays and talked on the phone and all that. It was never the same again and it was something I realized I have been mourning all my life, really mourning that relationship. And like this feeling of having exited the garden of Eden never to return. And it was like that to the point that during those years, if you asked me a simple question about my mother, like where did your mother grow up? Oh, she grew up in Brooklyn. That one exchange would make me cry. I couldn't talk about my mother without crying. And I was actually worried when I was writing the book. I was like, okay, I am writing about all of this. What am I going to do when the book comes out and somebody might ask me about this and maybe I am on national radio and I start weeping? And despite everything I am saying in the book, I didn't really want to be subject to uncontrollable weeping on air. But what ended up happening is there was something about immersing myself in this bittersweet tradition where the pain really became resolved. And I no longer feel that compulsion to weep at all and in fact, it's also happened my mother now has Alzheimer's and she has some of her memory and has lost a lot of it. And she doesn't remember all the years that we had all our troubles and the way we are together now is like the way we were when I was a kid, the sweet, loving, warmth has completely returned. And all these years I had actually started to doubt whether it had ever existed in the first place. And maybe I was misremembering my childhood, but I experience it now. And I am like, no, everything. I remember, we really were like that. And we are like that again now for this brief moment in time before she exits the stage. So yeah, that's been a kind of incredible personal transformation that I have been on and writing the book was incredibly helpful. I don't think it was the writing itself. You know, so for somebody listening, it's not like you have to go and write a whole book. I think it was rather the immersion in this bittersweet understanding of the world that these joys and pains and these loves and their losses and their reconstitutions, that it's all a normal part of being. And to experience all these things is actually to be that much more connected to humanity because we all go through it. We all do, it's the great force that unites us.

Darin: We think that we need to go pursue and go get and everything else. But yet we have these jewels here that just to putting the brakes on, in a certain sense and turning into the Bittersweets, I am sure people listening have things popping up that are unhealed and unresolved. And they are thinking about right now, and those are the bread crumbs of the



opportunity that awaits them to allow this kaleidoscopic coloring, to add the richness to their life. And also like you said, the access of dare, I say, personal purpose and passions and that unveiling of where you should go and where the real superpowers are. And you have this whole other side of the world that is looking for a greater purpose. When in fact it's kind of putting on the breaks and turning into this, I just want to say, thank you for writing the books you have done. And I am just so grateful to have met you and you are such a sweet person to deliver this information. And I encourage everyone to check out Bittersweet how sorrow and longing make us whole, because this is us. This is us as humans and it's not changing, but you can enrich your life by knowing yourself just a little more. And thank you, Susan, for the access of this stuff that seemingly gets punted all of the time. So, thank you so much for the time.

Susan: Absolutely, thank you so much for having me. It was such a treat to get, to spend time with you. I so enjoyed it and you really have an amazing presence. So, thank you for that.

Darin: Oh, thank you. It's lovely and it's very, very valuable, especially now more than ever that outside out there is not going to make up for what is going on inside so, super important.

#### **[00:45:20] 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 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.