Transforming Adversities Into Opportunities For Becoming The Better Version Of Ourselves Transcript

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Introduction to Dr. Ken Druck

– Hi everybody. My next guest is someone that I've really come to know and love. I don't get to see him, even though he lives pretty close. I don't get to see him often enough, but we're part of a group called the transformational leadership council and his name is Dr. Ken Druck, you may have seen him on tv, He's been on Oprah, Dr. Ken and Oprah back in the 80s and he's done some really amazing things in his life.

He's bestselling author. We'll talk about some of the books that he's written. He's an executive coach, consultant and an internationally known thought leader who literally has helped thousands and thousands of individuals and families with dealing with loss and also helping them become better versions of themselves. So we got a lot to uncover today.

He's a recipient, recipient of many, many awards, Distinguished contribution to psychology award. He's also written the books, uh some of you may have some of his books, but the real rules of Life, pretty interesting, healing your life after loss of a loved one, which we'll talk about his experience with that Two Secrets Men Keep, which in the 1980s was a huge, huge bestseller, courageous aging, which I know a lot of us are are in our fifties or sixties, seventies. And so that's a really important topic, raising an aging parent.

Now, raising an aging parent, not a child. I'm actually going through that Ken and my wife are are going through that with our my mother in law. My wife's mom who's 90 years old and lives with us has dementia.

So that's uh, that's really important when I know for many people and then he's got a new book coming out in 2023 next year called how we go on back in 1996, Ken founded the Jenna Druck Center to honor his daughter, Jenna who tragically lost her life in 1996 and he's done such amazing work with that center with that foundation, helping people who have lost loved ones in 9-11, Sandy Hook and columbine And he's trained.

How Grief and Loss Shape Life

This is really, really cool Ken, you've trained your organization's trained 18,000 young women to become leaders in their own lives and communities. So I am thrilled to have you here. I know there's a lot we can uncover.

You're such a brilliant human being in such a kind, loving, caring human being. Welcome to the global energy healing summit. Kan really, – I am so delighted to be with you tom and to be sharing this kind of time with you. You know, you and I never get to see each other, be able to do this together and also invite other people into our conversation is truly an honor. I'm delighted to be here. Yeah.

– So one of the things that you're known for is helping people deal with loss and can you talk? I don't know if that was something that you've always been known for, if that happened with the loss of your daughter. But can you take us through how that how that became such a focal point, you do many other things too, but you've helped literally thousands, tens of thousands, probably hundreds of thousands of people around the world deal with loss. Talk to us about your journey and that, you know, often I have the honor of teaching at places like the Harvard School of Public Health, where I teach something a term that I coined called grief literacy.

And I often started by saying that I had no idea how grief and loss and resilience were so much a part of not just the tragedies of our lives, the challenges, the opportunities, the success, the setbacks that it's woven into the fabric of our everyday lives and our entire lives and the generations, the passage through life.

You know, as we have our aging parents, as we become the aging parents at some point and as we ripen as human beings and that looking at both the challenges, meeting those challenges, rather than retreating, hiding,

denying, avoiding out, trying to outrun or out busy uh that meeting those challenges, meeting the moments of our lives is what defines the quality of our lives because once we do that, then we truly do become the better, stronger, more courageous, more, more, really responsive version of ourselves.

– Yeah. You know, I everyone's gonna have to deal with loss, right? I mean, we we hope we don't, but people, human beings do not live forever. And I had to deal with it very early on?

At three years old, my father was killed in Vietnam. And so I can still remember the taxi cab pulling up to come tell my mother that my father had been killed in Vietnam the day before my dad, I think was 30. My mom was 28 years old, she had a me three years old, she had a two year old son and a little six month old baby that was born while my dad was in Vietnam. And I, you know, no one taught my mom or any of us how to deal with it back then. And I think for my mom, she she passed away at 68, so not a terribly long life.

And I think part of what caused her now, she did have a form of leukemia, but it was one where she was supposed to live much longer, and she actually.

uh I think at some point she lost her will to live and and and but I, but I think part of that was because she still was grieving my father, right, had not dealt with that in in a way where she could uh face or meet, meet that moment and really uh feel it and and and not just move on where you never think about the person. I think that's what we want people to do, but not move on in a healthy way. I think that still was stressing her and and and uh was impacting her and impacted her health.

So this is such an important topic. Why do people avoid it? Why is it so, I mean, people die, right? You know, we don't, none of us are gonna get out of this alive.

I've heard people say before, but we we don't want to deal with it, right? Why is it so tough to deal with? – And it's not and my heart goes out to even just listening to your story and and that I that I partly know of losing your dad at age three.

You know, how does a three year old kid, how do you and your brother, your brother and your sister? How do you guys move on? And as your mom move on with three kids, it's like, my God, a future that's been obliterated. And it's not just the life losses, that tragic life losses that you and I have suffered me the death of my 21 year old daughter while studying abroad when the phone rings at 10 o'clock at night.

And in some ways I died. You know, they say that losing a child is truly the most severe kind of loss. But it's not only the life losses, it's the living losses, nobody's died, but here we are as little kids going through these kinds of changes.

The loss of your mother. Your mother is maybe resilient spirit or a smile or her looking forward to and talking about the future that had your dad in it.

It's the losses we suffer through the course of our lives. Maybe we fell in love like me with our third grade teacher. She just Mrs. Fletcher just understood everything.

She supported me in ways and helped me learn and, and, and I had learning disabilities. The difference is we call them now, but after leaving third grade was devastating.

Whereas was lecture, you know, and, and if we go back across the timelines of of our lives, we can look at the changes, the turns in the road, the losses, we've suffered, the changes, we've suffered the setbacks, We didn't make the team or we made the team but dropped the ball in the ninth inning.

You know, whatever they are, we can either accumulate them as our psycho history that holds us back, that inhibits us, That allows us to operate from fear in our lives and every one of us has a chance to take inventory and say, you know, are there things in my past losses, I've suffered change.

Unwelcome changes. Even the loss of innocence where somebody for the first time we were bullied or the first time somebody said, Hey, you're tall or you're short or whatever.

Walking with a Limp in the Heart

You know, somebody put us in a box, but those kinds of things, things that have inhibited us that have held us back that have kept our own foot on our own throat rather than our hand on our heart. The hand of encouragement and kindness and confidence and clarity and encouragement. So it's, it's important at any station of life where the window is open for us to do so to take inventory, to start by taking inventory and saying other things that have happened in my life, losses, I have suffered. Unwelcome changes that have defined the way I hold myself and I move through this life. And I think the identification of those things is a great starting point because until we understand that we can't really start managing how well, how do I go on? What what is the resilience?

Not just resilience that comes? Because we read a great book or somebody said the glass is half full or we had a heavy dose of positive thinking, but the kind of resilience that grows organically from us having cleared the path forward from having vented or voiced and allowed ourselves the healing, The reconciliation, the acceptance and acceptance doesn't mean that the clay slate is clear. You know, people ask me Ken, how are you doing?

It's been, you know, it's been 26 years since Jenna died. She died 26 years ago. She only 21 years old. People say, how is it now? How, how are you doing?

And I tell people, you know what I've learned to walk with a limp in my heart now, my buddies who came back from Vietnam without a leg. Um, you know, I, I can't tell you going through life with them.

The ones who returned, unlike your dad and who are my brothers and best friends had to learn how to overcome the shame or the embarrassment and somehow reconcile that they were going to be walking with a limp for the rest of their lives.

They were not gonna be, allow shame to become the central organizing principle of their lives. And I have had to learn equally how to not apologize for or defend or explain or feel like I'm broken and and therefore I'm unworthy of love or respect or, or whatever that to walk with a limp in our hearts means we've taken a hit, we've suffered a hit. We don't need to be ashamed of it.

That's the way we will walk through the rest of our lives. That's what happened. And when you talked about your mom before, that would be the first thing I would have said to your mom.

I would have told her that I've, I'm learning how to walk with a limp in my heart. I'm learning that if I'm walking behind a girl that has my daughter's hair, her beautiful blonde hair, it triggers me, I'm not, I haven't dumbed down or stopped loving her or stop thinking about her.

I've managed my sense of loss, my grief and my love to the point that that won't trigger me into a deep dark hole. That what became started as love? The purest form of love apparent for a kid that became an unspeakable sorrow has become love again when I think of my daughter in most cases, except when I'm triggered and I'm walking down the street or her best friend calls to tell me how her kids are doing or something like that.

Where I see my other daughter, my earth daughter, not my angel daughter. I see my earth daughter crying because her her sister isn't there to enjoy her beautiful twin sons.

And I see a tear in her eye. Sure I'm gonna be triggered, I'm still alive and my love and my sorrow will probably both be with me for the rest of my life. – I love I love the angel daughter and the earth daughter. That's really a great distinction.

And I and I also I like how you've expanded the conversation here. So we all have losses. It doesn't have to be losing a loved one or a friend. All the different losses that you know we have like, over the course of a year you're gonna you're gonna you're gonna get hurt, right? You're you get bumped, you're gonna get you're gonna get older,

yeah, you're gonna get older, right?

– It's like I'm I've lost some people are still grieving the loss of their younger self? – Yeah. – Oh my God, what happened to me? You know that we look at the mirror and we have that conversation that foot on your throat conversation. You know, what's wrong with you?

What's the matter with you? You know? Look at you. Let's we gotta fix you. You know, rather than you are so beautiful. You are in so many ways, the best version of yourself. And look at you ripening as a human being.

You know, the acceptance, the opportunity in every moment to accept, to keep our hands on our heart. Even those tough moments where we tell ourselves, how could I not feel?

How can I not feel hurt? How could I not feel frustrated or you know, how could I not feel? So that's the way I feel and accepting that emotional reality that allows us to start breathing again and clearing that path forward.

– Well, I want to get some tips for you on how to do that in just a minute. But before we do that, what happens when people don't accept it? When they block it? What's the impact on their mental health?

What's the impact on their physical health? What what goes, what what is their life like when they're blocking this acceptance of of a loss? – Yeah. Well, first of all the effect is that managing denial?

Managing something that's not true. A story that we tell ourselves. That isn't quite the truth of what happened, um, managing, having to deflect Emotions, keep them out or carry them on our back, like, like a £50 backpack takes energy. So the effect is often we are carrying an unnecessary amount of weight around. We're dragging it around through our lives.

We're armored with it. We're disallowing the full measure of life, of emotion, of interaction, of connection with other people, Of connection with our own truth, of connection with our own heart and with connection with the greater possibilities of our lives, whatever they may be in relationships in our business and our work in our vision of what's happening in the world today.

You know, that comes from, in my view, a self compassionate heart. We either move on the spectrum from self harsh self criticism to beautiful, warming self compassion. We we start living on this side of the world in a loop of narratives, of ways of looking at the world, explaining things to ourselves, connecting with other people or protecting ourselves from intimacy with other people or or not dealing with the differences that we have with other people effectively.

Caring for Aging Parents

So we can either live on that side or but when we start allowing and meeting the moment of our sorrows, of our grief, of our losses, we start becoming more alive, more responsive, more organically resilient.

You start telling ourselves a different kind of story. It's a story of of acceptance. A self compassionate voice says, how could I not feel that way? That of shaming ourselves?

It's like what's wrong with you, You shouldn't feel that way or don't tell anybody you're jealous. The self compassionate part of us says, I can see how jealous you're feeling right now. How threatened you know about something that happened. And it's a good that's the starting point for resolution of conflict, for resolution of harsh self criticism for resolution of what should I do of a of taking action that's going to be effective rather than hiding denying repressing and hiding and retreating from the moment rather than meeting it. So I think that's that's one of the things that happens and the loss of connection with other people is one of the greatest losses we feel. Either we feel alone all the time or distrusting all the time or unsafe all the time or in fear all the time.

That oh, it's just gonna be another string of losses. What's next? You know? So we did, we developed the kind of the cynical protections and and and defenses. We set up a defense structure that's Impenetrable and or we start

cultivating a way of being in the world where we're learning where we have a certain sense of humility where we're open to discovery and wonder where we're open to uh building trust in a relationship so that we can become closer so we can do more and more fun things and and more adventurous things and get to know ourselves better in the relationships that we have with our families, with our closest friends with our aging parents where we have a lot of conversations that need to happen and so on.

– When someone is going through the aging process, right, Which I am, you are we all are we have a lot of people that will be watching this, that are probably in their forties, fifties, sixties, even seventies.

Uh and there they are stuck there carrying that stuck energy. What do you what do you recommend? Like what can they do to start get that energy flowing again instead of like carrying around that baggage of stuck energy?

What are a couple ideas or steps that you would advise people to take? – Well, the first thing first thing is, you know, and I got asked that question after I wrote courageous aging, jumped to number one on amazon after I wrote that people were saying could you write a book about all the things we can do?

Give me exercise because there were exercises in that book. But so I wrote a book called the Personal journal, Courageous aging Personal Journal, which has 100 exercises things we can do. But let me give you a few people like the most.

Number one is beginning to catch ourselves to notice is my foot. Am I talking to myself with my foot on my throat? Am I a suspect in a courtroom where there's only a prosecuting attorney with a demonic wishing finger of blame and accusation accumulating evidence to prove that you know, I'm unworthy of love or I shouldn't be in this job or you know, I'm not good enough for this relationship or you know, I'm not even good enough for for my parents love or my Children's love or whatever am I postured to what degree am I postured in this life?

Have I positioned myself with my foot on my throat compared to my hand on my heart, holding myself compassionately with understanding with acceptance, with curiosity, to understand more with kindness above anything with kindness, with encouragement, with support, with humility. Because one of the greatest strengths we have as we get older is the capacity for humility for understanding what we are a part of since at some point we're not going to be a part of this body and and showing up in this three dimensional way in the world, what are we gonna be apart Neil Degrasse Tyson has such a beautiful statement about that.

He talks about, you know, people's fear of dying and he says, if you're dying, you, you know, you are part of the universe. Your molecules are molecules of and now we've discovered it's not just one universe.

We are in universes or universe that we thought we, you know, we had this place, it's like they're unlimited universes. Oh my God, we're part that we're we're yes, we feel small and insignificant, but we are a part of something so mysterious and so grand the great beyond is even beyond anything. We can imagine, and we are a part of that mystery and you know, how could we not feel lost at times? How could we not feel scared in this?

Unknowing this? Let's make it a fertile unknowing this, not a terrified, kicking and screaming. Unknowing this. So anyhow, that's, that's one of the things that measure of hand to heart.

And the other thing I'd say is take a measure. One of the highest forms of knowing in this life is understanding paradox how both things can be true. I can be broken if you look deeply into my eyes, you and you talk, we're talking about my daughter Jenna or my grandsons, you will see a joyfulness or a sorrow. You can see right into it.

Let's talk about my, my Brokenness, you would see my sorrow about losing my daughter Jenna. I'm sorrowful and I'm whole and joyful. Both are true. I'm broken and I'm whole and one of the most whole people you, you might ever meet, but I'm also one of the most broken hearted people you might ever meet.

So we can be broken and whole. We can feel empty at times in this life where we're just staring into the abyss. We don't know, you know, we're in transition, we used to have a purpose, maybe we used to have a career now we're retiring or our kids have all moved out.

We're not the hub mom anymore or the hub dad who had such a strong sense of purpose and was so needed? Have the family around. So maybe we're in that place of lost nous and emptiness in our lives and we're transitioning to a new found found nous to a newfound purposefulness, to a newfound joyfulness, to a newfound way of operating and being in the world.

And those are the transitions that are a part of the ride, that's part of the deal is that we get to go through those trains, you're nothing wrong with us. So understanding, I'm broken and whole, in fact, my Brokenness and the way I need it is the biggest part of my wholeness.

I am lost and I'm found, you know, my daughter is gone and she's right here. As a matter of fact, I wear a little necklace with the Hebrew word me, which means I am here and sometimes if I need to be reminded that she's never, she's gone and she's never left my side or my heart.

– Absolutely, I love that, Ken, that's so beautiful. Yeah, great stuff. I'm gonna be a little selfish here. I'm gonna ask a question about raising agent parents because we have one in our house, but I know a lot of people and you know, pretty much everybody that has a relationship with their parents will at some point in time be raising aging parents, they might not be in the house with them, but they'll be helping to take care of them.

So it's tough, I mean I see my wife, it's uh you know, it's it's a it's a she has so much love for mom, but also it literally is like going back and having, you know, for us now because she has dementia, a two or three year old and she still remembers who we are, but doesn't remember how to get back to her room from the kitchen.

Uh you know, doesn't really know how old she is, you know, she doesn't really know a lot. What are some tips on raising aging parents? – Well, first of all, my heart goes out to you and your wife, how blessed is your mother in law to have a daughter and a son who would take a son in law who would take her into their home, um and who had the capacity to do that.

So that's number one, So that's your hand on your heart, appreciating how difficult, how unspeakably difficult it is to suffer the loss of a mother who has not died and you know, it's ability, – It really is so different because she is not anything close to the person that we knew, right. She literally is so different in some ways that she's funnier in some ways. So it's interesting.

She used to be kind of quiet and just super sweet, but she'll say things that just like make you laugh, but it's not the same, you know, personality. So I just want to let people know that you're so accurate with that.

– Yeah, And you know it's it is normal and natural for roles to begin reversing as adult Children watch their parents get older. And it's like whether it's taking away the car keys or having to be a caregiver or filling in with mom and dad, don't know how to use technology or things are becoming too complicated or confusing or helping them move out of the family home.

God knows there are 1000 ways that our parents as they get older need their adult Children. And some people believe, well if you have an aging parent, you're lucky already.

Well not always. I mean, yes, you're blessed that they're still here and and you can experience the joy of her unedited un you know, unfiltered humor and and the joy of her in those moments she does remember and she does connect. But the loss watching, losing somebody, whether it's and I'm right now helping a family that's losing their eight year old daughter, little by little who has a terminal form of cancer.

Whether it's loose slowly piece by piece or and I work a lot with the A. L. S. Foundation watching and my best buddy died of a L. S.

How to Find Ken Druck and His New Book

Watching somebody lose their capacity to maintain life is excruciatingly painful and difficult and it requires us to summon new found courage and strength that nothing less than that and faith and understanding that these are

sometimes life's terms and they suck as my daughter and her friends would say they they stink.

We we have every right to hate this part of the way history will be written, hate the way it turned out to object to it too, in our impotent rage to whale and to scream. And and you know, if you know, for me that was in the beginning, you know, wanting to spit in the face of the universe, I was so furiously angry, I had made attributions that God was kind of the puppeteer watching over everything.

This happened on your watch until I was able to see a tear in the eye of God and understand that God is not in that in my conceptions, the attributions I would make of God. God is the force of love and goodness in the world of anything. God is not the puppeteer, that there are things that happen, that these are life's terms.

People will get into accidents, people will suffer illnesses, people will age in brutally difficult ways with dementia, Alzheimer's and so on, and that it will fall upon somebody else to help them deal with that, to show up to be present. And and it requires, when you ask, what do we do about it, how do we go on?

It requires the Advanced self care protocol advance. I'm not talking about manis and pedis, I'm talking about the advanced self care. And I have a little booklet on pro grade self care that I give to people who work in hospice.

People who work in the District attorney's officer in the police department or the military where they're in a war zone and they need care. They need no excuses, No apologies to take time to come up for air, to make sure they're getting rest and so on and so forth.

And I would say to you and anybody else out there who is having to deal with being the caregiver number one bless your heart for showing up because I understand the cost of that. I've done it.

And number two take impeccably good and better than ever care of yourself. Come up for air, get support, delegate where you can delegate, take time away, take time listening to your own heart that might be crying out or that might be fearing dementia in your own life or the life of another person that you love or might have been triggered and grieving a past loss.

That even having had the word dimension that were so much more aware, we might be thinking back to an uncle. It's like, my God, we used to joke and kid about him, you know, I think he was suffering dementia. How could I have been so cruel or you know, unkind or unaware. So whatever it is self care and on your heart and acknowledging yourself for the blessing that you're giving in this life by care. Giving an aging parent with dementia or with another very challenging condition? – No, I love it.

Can your work is so powerful. How can people find you and and access your work? You've got lots of books. You probably have other things to talk to us about how people can access right here.

– Right here. Come on. Thank you. Go. You know, the best thing is to go to kendruck.com Go to my website. I've, I've put all the things that I do the way you can get my books, the way you can get some of the pamphlets I talked about the way you can watch Youtube's or read many of the articles I write voluminously or you can find out about the new book.

All of that is probably going to be available on my website and my website is kendruck.com K E N D R U C K dot com. My office phone is (858) 8637825. If you need to get a hold of me sooner you can go to info at kendruck.com. That's another possibility.

And if you can't, if none of those things work, call Tom and Tom, I need to get a hold of Ken Druck. – Now you're delegating delegating to me. Okay? Like you guys call, Ken, he gave you the number and you can go to his website. Last question.

Tell us about your new book coming out in 2023. What's that going to be about? – I have never been prouder, or more excited about anything that I've written.

Yeah. Then what I'm writing now and the reason tom and you know, this is an author is that this book wrote me, this book has just, you know, I I live in this world and I pay close attention to what's happening, whether it's what's happening in Ukraine, whether it's what's happening in our country. I write for the Hill, I write op EDS on how we can not polarize how we can pull together and pull this country together again. Um I, you know, whatever it is, I have put it all together in uh and made it available on my website. And that is the best way to access.

And I have now embodied it in the new book. How we go on is about how we go on as human beings in a personal way. It's how we go on meeting the challenges of growing up and growing hole when something's blocking us when we're stuck in a relationship and a job and a career in a way of thinking and being how we go on facing loss and adversity, whether it's living losses or life losses.

And the final chapter is about how we go on after we're no longer how do we pay it forward? Leave? A legacy of love, not of chaos. So it the stories, the sharing it came through me and I feel so blessed to be able to continue to share my life's work With audiences around the world. And when will that be out in 2023?

I wish I could tell you exactly. Okay, I'm sitting here making the first draft perfect. You know, and then I've got to send it out to my buddies like you and tell me Ken, you know, could lighten up here or put its paragraph in here or whatever. So I think it's probably the middle part.

Okay, 2023 that's that's my realistic, I'd like to say March, but I think probably the beginning of the summer. – Fantastic! How we go on coming in 2023. He's got lots of resources now though available. So kendruck.com, D R U C K. Ken, It's been wonderful having you on my friend, thank you so much for being with us.

Any final words you'd like to share with people, – It's an honor to be part of the summit. What you are doing. My hand is on my heart and on your heart, thanking you for what goes into building, creating and and offering this summit to people across the world. And I thank you and I acknowledge you for your life's work and making these kind of offerings. – Thank you, Ken, you're helping so many people. I will see you soon in person.

God bless you and thanks for being on with us. – God bless you.