

Hello and welcome to Plenty. I'm so excited for you to tune into today's episode. We are with Tina Wells today who's the author of the Elevation Approach. She's also the founder of Relevant Media, a multimedia content venture that brings culture shifting storytelling, and beloved products to market through innovative partnerships. So we are diving into how to take your idea and bring it to fruition through her unique four phase process called the Elevation Approach.

Now we start off with Tina telling the story of how after 24 years of running Buzz Marketing Group, she decided to shut it down even though it had been her identity since the age of 16. How she went about doing these, this incredible project curating Oprah's Super Soul 100 and how she got product lines into Target. She's also the author of 19 books,

including the middle grade novel, honest June, the bestselling tween fiction series, Mackenzie Blue and its spinoff series, the Z Files. She launched two product lines with Target in the last year, and she is absolutely a wizard of networking, of creating meaningful connections and creating meaningful products, both in book form and in retail form, to really bring that to the market in a way that helps consumers like you and me vote with our dollars and really realize that our dollars can make a difference in the landscape of commerce.

So I know you are going to love Tina and be as inspired by her as I am, and enjoy the episode. Welcome to Plenty. I'm your host, Kate Northrop, and together we are going on a journey to help you have an incredible Relationship With money, time, and energy, and to have abundance on every possible level. Every week we're gonna dive in with experts and insights to help you unlock a life of plenty.

Let's go fill our cups. Please Note that the opinions and perspectives of guests on The Plenty Podcast are not necessarily reflective of the opinions and perspectives of Kate Northrop or anyone who works within the Kate Northrop brand. Hey Tina, welcome to Plenty. Thank you for having me. Kate. Thank you for being here. I wanna start with, okay, so you started a marketing company when you were 16.

Yes. Which is not normal. So like, just like, take me back. You're 16 years old. What had you think that you were able to do that? I always say I was an accidental entrepreneur and I love to take everyone back to 1996 when I started. I actually just watched the supermodels Apple tv, if you really wanna understand where we were in the mid nineties.

Okay, amazing. That's a good way to set the scene. And I was like a pop culture obsessed teenager. And so at 15, I had answered an ad in 17 Magazine for a newspaper that was looking for writers, and I got offered a job writing product reviews, and that is what started my career. I was like, yes, I'm all in.

I didn't know what it meant. I quickly found out I would get to try product, write about it, and then I would often send companies back what I wrote about their product. And I always got the same question, oh, if I keep sending you product, will you keep telling me what you think? And I thought by 16, this is the coolest job ever.

And so I didn't know that I could get paid for this, right. That came a few years later, but I became the girl that if you sent her stuff, she would tell you what she thought. And then it became too much for me. I brought in some friends and that was really how I started. It was my freshman year of college when I had done this research report,

which was like a compilation of surveys from me and my friends. And one of those clients said, I'm gonna tell you something really important. I just paid \$25,000 for market research. You have a business, what you and your friends did is 10 times better. Go figure it out. Wow. And I, again, just so happened to be taking an intro to business course at my college with the head of the department.

I went to see her during office hours and said, I dunno what any of this means, but I've been doing this thing. And she just kind of stared at me and she said, okay, listen, take an independent study with me next semester. We're gonna make this a business. And it was the hardest 13 weeks of my life, but what I learned from her and what I learned about building a business really was the framework that ran that company for 20 plus years.

That's amazing. Okay. And there were so many accolades along the way. Yeah. It became very successful there, you know, widely, widely known. You were listed, you know, winning awards, all these different things. And then there was a moment where you looked at your, at, like you, you kind of took a look under the hood and realized what was going on.

And there was a moment when you decided that it was time to go a different direction. Take me to that moment and describe what was happening. You know? So it was essentially, it was 20 years later. Yeah, it was 24 years later. And so let's go start with the high before I like crash. Right? That was probably 2016 where I was really privileged to get to build something incredible called the Super Soul 100.

And I got, That's how I found out about you. Yes. I got to work with the Oprah Winfrey Network, an amazing team of people. And it was, you know, at that time I had become known for my work in the influencer marketing space. And I, you know, once I got the gig, I was terrified, right?

I'm like, how am I gonna build an influencer program for the world's biggest influencer, right? I was like, this is just gonna be, this could be greater, it could be awful, of course it was amazing, but it was such a high of this is the best thing we can do to amplify voices, right? You're amplifying the best people with the best vision who wanna do such great things in the world.

And after that I thought, well, how do I go back to selling a computer? Right? I was like, that's a little bit different energy. But then I said, well, I'm gonna get right back into it. And it was a few years later that it's the first time I saw the writing on the wall. And I think, like a lot of people,

I resisted it and I think when you are, you know, I was 39, so we could do a whole episode about what happens to women at 39, right? When you're staring down your forties and, and I really,

I'm like, someone needs to write the book about being 39 because there's so much where you're reflective about what you've achieved and what you haven't and,

and physically what starts to happen to you. Right? All the things that worked before don't work anymore. And I remember thinking, why has no one written a guide to being 39? You know? And 39 was the year where everything kind of went off the rails for me a bit, you know, where I was deeply unhappy with my career and couldn't quite understand why that was also the year my father got very,

very ill, right? So I write about this in my book where he spent quite a bit of time in the hospital and during that time, what I kept realizing, I spent a lot of time in the hospital with him, and I kept walking away thinking, dad is so happy with his life, he's happy with the choices he's made, he's content,

right? He's going through all of this for us. But if it were up to him, he's like, I've done what I need to do, I am so happy. And I kept thinking, I don't feel that way right now. Like, if this were it for me, I don't think this is the best thing I could do. You know?

And that was all of 39, you know, till I finally took a sabbatical. My first in 23 years. And I'm, you know, in Yellowstone, and I have a big, you and I talk about this a lot, if you have big things ahead of you, for some reason, getting into nature and being part of something that is bigger than you immediately diminishes the size of your problem,

right? Where you're like, the world is working without me, right? Yes. Yeah. It's that moment of like, get self-aware things are happening, you know? And I remember sitting in Yellowstone and saying, I never wanna go back to my agency again. And I didn't know what that meant, right? That was my identity for, for forever.

Your entire adult life. My entire, I was the buzz lady, right? Like that was just who I was. And so then I started realizing, well, I'm on boards that I really don't wanna be on. I have other positions that I like, but I don't wanna do them. And so I just started quitting everything and my parents, God bless my parents,

they were just like, we're gonna ride this wave with you. And I remember when I said, and I quit Wharton, and they were like, okay, because you were teaching at Wharton, I was teaching at Wharton. They were like, okay, I don't think anybody quits Wharton. I was like, I just have to make space. And I didn't know what I was making space for.

I didn't know what I, but I just knew I just needed a pause, you know? And then after I made space, a lot of magical things started happening. How did you know? 'cause so many people before we started recording, so many people will ask me too, in my programs, like, how do I know if it's time to shut it down or if there's if,

or, or if I'm in resistance or if, if I just stuck it out a little longer, if things would shift, like how did you know? And, and you talk about a process actually in the elevation approach, I can probably find it where, where you ask yourself a series of questions to really determine, is this a goal I wanna pursue anymore?

Or is this a goal that needs to die? You know, I think I did it the wrong way. Like a lot of people, which is the sticking it out, okay. Right When you go, if I just give it one more hard press. Totally. Right? And what normally happens in the hard press is an unbelievable breakdown, right?

And what I've learned in my forties is I don't need the full breakdown anymore. I can just stop it before that happens. But what often happens is if we don't stop it somehow, this, I don't know how to describe it, but it almost feels like you're not, in reality what happens in a breakdown, it's like, is this my life?

Is this, like when I hear, like for example, I hear a friend who is like, I was escorted by security out of the biz, out of the building when they were the SVP of X, Y, and Z. And they're like, how is this my life? Right? So it's like that kind of, but I knew, I knew,

and then that same person will say, but I knew I needed to quit my job six months ago, but it took being escorted away from the job, right? So we don't wanna have to end up, right. It took me crashing and burning and being in this place of saying, this business isn't even making me money anywhere. Like, it's just all the things were just not happening.

Right? But I knew for a while before that that I needed to, to change it. But sometimes we have to get to the place where it's like, almost like that rock bottom where we're like, okay. And I think now I'm looking at the process you talk about in the book, it's like, I don't wanna get to rock bottom. So how do I stop that from happening now?

Yes. And one major through line of your book, which I loved is joy. Yeah. So at that time when you were 39, you know, your dad was sick, you, you go on this sabbatical, you're considering shutting down your company. That's been your identity for 24 years. Were you feeling joyful at that time in your life? Was joy even on your radar as a thing to prioritize?

I absolutely not. I remember that winter so clearly because I was like crying every day. And that's not my personality. And I couldn't understand. I understood a year later I was grieving what I was going to give up and I couldn't, I couldn't believe that I had. So when it, when it was done and I said I'm shutting it down,

there was joy. But I realized later it was because I grieved it first, you know? And I don't know if anyone else has had that experience of the grief before you actually, it's like my body had a knowing of what was coming before I even was ready to accept it. Yeah. And so when it happened, I was like, oh,

great, that's over. But, and I remember thinking, how could I not have been more upset? And then it dawned on me, but that was what the winter was. You were grieving and in a way you knew what was coming and you were getting prepared for it. But what's also fascinating is in my dad's situation, he was joyful. And I remember thinking he's going through so much,

and every nurse, every doctor would, I would come in, would say, oh, your dad. Like, they would come in and get advice from my, they were like, he's just the nicest kindness. And I remember thinking, if I were going through a life changing situation like this, would I be extending kindness and making, and, and have so much joy the way he did?

You know? And that's what it really helped me understand. Joy is not about the current circumstance, right. Joy is a state that we choose to live in. And I can be very joyful in times. I'm deeply unhappy about things happening. Right? But that need to separate, I had to learn that year. Like I can have a lot of joy and be unhappy with how things are going in the world right now,

but that's different than the joy in how I choose to exist every day. And I had to learn how to navigate that. And your dad's a pastor, right? Yeah. So you, you grew up and are a woman of faith. Yeah. And it sounds like, you know, your dad's really walking the walk in terms of like being able to bring joy to a hospital when he's the one who's sick and then be uplifting.

The nurses and the doctors and his daughter's so beautiful. It's so generous. It's so, Dad, I, you know, for any other pks out there, it can be not the best experience pastors kids, right? Pastor's kids, yes. It can be a, and If you were a pk, you would know what that meant. You know,

I'm calling to my people. Right? It's like you're in a place of always being looked at and watching. You have to show. And you know, my dad was just always, you know, so careful with the six of us, always our teacher and I, I also went to a Christian school and I would come home every day and say,

I'm not liking this. I don't really know that I believe this. I'm not really here for this. And we would sit there and have these amazing conversations and, you know, the greatest gift he has given me was, he always said, Tina, you need your own relationship. Whatever you do, don't even listen to something. Because I'm telling you,

I want you to seek and find and believe for yourself, and I wanna give you a process to help you do that. But just because I say something doesn't mean it's true. Right. And a lot of parents wouldn't say that, right? I grew up in the time of like, what I say is God. And my dad was like, go figure it out.

And I, I really appreciated that throughout my entire spiritual journey, is just seeking and being interested in being curious. Right? And we talk in the elevation approach. One of the things I talk about is get curious, right? And so, so I think a lot of that curiosity comes from him. And just the idea that I could go out and seek and just,

you know, educate myself in whatever way feels good to me. Yeah. You know, really came from him. What A beautiful gift. Yeah. Now the elevation approach is a four phase cycle that really takes you from the inception of an idea or a desire or a goal all the way through the creation of it. And then, you know, you could use it to run a marathon or clean up a room or launch an entire company or have a baby.

Like, I mean, you could apply this to so many different areas of your life. And I'm curious, can you choose an example from your life where you've applied the elevation approach to walk us through what the four phases are? Oh goodness. That, you know, I write a lot of middle grade fiction and Middle grade meaning like, is that Like meaning seven to 12-year-old,

seven, I gotta get all your books for Middle school. I, she's so ready. That's my girl that My reader, she's become like such an avid reader. I'm gonna get 'em today. But even I Immediately after the episode, I'm on Amazon. Okay. I mean, and that process, you know, when you're writing fiction and it's illustration,

there are illustrations involved. It's a little more involved than the average, right? So yes, there's a lot of back and forth and art approvals and you need a process in, in my opinion. And so where, where the elevation approach came from. So let's talk about how I wasn't doing it correctly, right? I write in the book about burning out for the first time at 27,

and it started at 16 and it was, you know, I think I was in hustle culture before it even became a thing, right? And so, hustling. Hustling, what I realized is I was stuck in these two phases. So there are four phases in the elevation approach. You hit on preparation, inspiration, recreation, and transformation. And what was happening is I was always in preparation and inspiration,

meaning I would get a big idea, I would research it, I would do all the things. Then after I had, you know, is this feasible, I would go to inspiration, which is really about socializing it. And I would get even more excited from the people I talked to about it. And then I would go back to working on the idea again.

So I was in this loop and then I was wondering why was nothing ever getting completed And what was, you know, why was I kind of stuck always in a cycle. And then my cousin, who was one of my dear girlfriends at the time, she said, we're gonna go on vacation, you know, to Miami and your laptop's not invited.

And I was like deeply offended. I was like, what Do you Mean I need to work? And you know, I remember, it's so embarrassing to say this, but like the first day we went and we laid by the pool and I was like, but what do we do here? Do we just lay here? And that's like an activity,

you know, I like, I couldn't understand that you would just, I was like so Funny. Do I bring an iPod? This Is an activity. I was like, Oh, and I listen to music and I just lay here in the sun. That's interesting. And then, you know, of course my laptop died because I had, I wasn't on it all.

I was like, oh, I'm really living. And then when I came home, I actually finished the idea and executed it. And that was an aha moment for me. And that was really what became the transformation for me was, and not quite right. It was like, oh, I need rest. So then what do I do? What a lot of us do,

we start taking rest breaks, but we're also still on that treadmill, right? Yes. So I wasn't, I was just, it's like foot on the gas and the brake at the same time. Exactly. Which doesn't give you either productivity or rest. That's what I did for years. And so when we fast forward to where I was in 2019,

that's when I really said, and I have to live this. Like, I'm so broken right now. I couldn't try to fake it through a va, you know what I mean? And like get the gas I needed anyway. And it was a time of real stillness. And that's when I was able to start to think and ask those tough questions.

And, and a lot of the elevation approach as you've read it, you probably see I'm asking you to ask yourself a lot of questions. It's so helpful. Yeah. Yeah. And the things we don't, because when you stop and when you're in stillness, that's when you can actually have that conversation. So sometimes we like the movement because we don't actually have to reckon with ourselves.

When you're moving, you don't have to take stock and say, so this is not working, this is not good. This doesn't feel good in my body. I am not joyful doing this. Then that's hard. Because what if you have a lot of stuff that you don't like, you know, that transformation is hard. That's why rest is hard for us as a society,

because rest means now I'm aware, now I'm taking a moment and I may not like what's coming up. A hundred percent. Yeah. That's why most of us avoid it. You have absolutely hit the nail on the head. Okay. So one of the, one of the sections, one of the sections here, you talk about work life balance versus work-life harmony.

And that's, and that's really, you know, one of the foundational principles of your book is work-life Harmony. What is the difference between the two and what do you see as, as some of the pitfalls of trying to focus on work-life balance? Yeah. So I think any of us who came up in the two thousands, 2000 tens, it was balance,

balance, balance. And what I started to realize is I loved my work and I worked a lot. So work-life balance, if you're looking at a scale means here's all the work now here's all the play. And so all we're doing is working and playing and working and playing. And that doesn't feel good either. When I started to think about the idea of harmony,

to me it's, it's like you have a plate and your plate is filled with the things you want on that plate. All of those flavors, all of those things work together in a way that makes sense for your palate. And you know, immediately when you add something that's not right. Right? And so it's not about piling on, it's about the proportion being just right for you.

So if what's just right for you is more work than the average person, but you've got a few other things on the plate that balance it, that's fine. Yeah. Right? It's not an idea of piling on just to kind of keep things in balance. 'cause we're never gonna fully ever be in balance. Right. And, and you need permission.

There are seasons, like if you're working on a PhD, you're going to be working really hard at a certain point, right? You. And so you can't schedule a vacation at the same time that you're like in the throes of your dissertation. Right. You have to understand if you're in finals in college, you have to say that season's gonna be hard.

But what I can already plan is after I finish, it's the trip, it's the summer break, right? We can start to schedule in those breaks that are celebratory or some time after we've had that hard push, right? And balance doesn't allow, that balance says I'm pushing hard and playing hard and pushing in. And that doesn't feel good in your body at all.

No, it doesn't. And one of the things I love is in your recreation section you speak about, just as you said, that like rest is hard for us. There's a reason we avoid it. But actually downregulating and allowing our brain to have that space can, it doesn't necessarily need to look like we're doing nothing. Like it's not all lying by the pool.

So I, you know, I work with phases all the time, obviously. And so I love the way that your framework works with these four phases of a cycle because obviously like, you know, I'm obsessed with the menstrual cycle and the lunar cycle and the seasons and it all works together. So it's like such a mimic of nature. But One of the misunderstandings we have is that rest has to look like you're doing nothing.

Yep. And the recreation phase really is a, a pause where you're able to give yourself space for creativity, for integration, whatever. So talk about the recreation phase. 'cause this is, I think where as a culture we are weaker in our ability to prioritize what you're talking about in that phase. Yes. And I'm sure you saw a lot in the book.

I often say we should watch children. Yes. Oh my god, you're so into kids, right? I love that Part. Yes. But children know how to play like they really do and they are in it like magical worlds, right? Oh yeah. Oh, like when they're playing, they are committed to Play. I mean, you give Ruby my five-year-old a Popsicle stick,

and she is like on a different planet deep, deep in this. It's fascinating. I, my youngest nephew is two and a half, and when you are playing with him, you better be in it on like, it's not a like, ah-huh? I'm playing and I'm on my phone. I mean, he does this like no, no computer.

The first time he came up to me and he was like, oh no. And it was the finger. I was like, what is love that, you know? And you know, my nephews are in Italy, they're half Italian, half American. And, and my sister-in-law was like, oh, he hates the laptop. I was like,

children are like, know, I don't, you know, no to this, I want full. So it's that deepness where you have to be so present with children. Yeah. Right. They demand that. Yeah. And that you are in the play. And I think we, we kind of like, I I, one point I made in the book is working out is not recreation.

Yeah. That's part, for me, that's part of preparation. It's part of what you do to show up and it really wires you to get curious and be able physically, mentally, emotionally to show up for the work of preparation. Right. But recreation is, you know, if you're lo and think about playing with your kids or running around and you're outside doing,

and you're totally lost in that, and then you come back and you're like, I don't know where this thought came from, but I figured out a problem. Like how to solve a problem. Or I don't know if any of you experienced like waking up from sleeping and you're like, oh, I know exactly how I'm gonna deal with this problem. And you're like,

where did that come from? I wasn't working on thinking through the solution, but it just showed up. Right. So I really think for me, recreation is that connection that it just works something out for me in a way where I'm not actively working it out in my mind. And sometimes the body needs to help the mind, right? Like it all has to work together.

And you know, I'm very into seasonality. The elevation approach. For me, winter's preparation spring is inspiration. That's when we wanna get out and about and be more social. Summer is recreation, fall is transformation. It's where we bring it all together. And so you don't have to live the elevation approach that way. I choose to, I like to really be in,

in tune with the seasons as well. But I think about my summer and I think about just all the play or family time and things we can do that when it's time for everyone to get back to work in the fall, we feel rested. We feel ready for that last hard push. You know? But if you are wondering, how do I do recreation,

right? I, I would just say watch children. Like they are so good at it. They Are so good at it. Yeah. And it's, you know, they're designed that way because of the divine design of our brains. They are developing so much knowledge and integration. Their brains are growing and the play is actually, it's is not just for fun.

Right. I mean it is and that's worth it and of itself. But it is because the ra, the reason children are using their imagination and they're playing in that way is because it's an important step of brain development. And you spoke about how important it is with our neuroplasticity and doing new things as we get older because it engages that same thing, which is building new neural networks,

creating new synapsis, firing together. Like we don't have to lose that as we get older. And I know you prioritize spending a lot of time with your nieces and nephews, so I'm sure you're

getting a ton of that and like doing all sorts of new things. But even the career change I made
Yeah, right. To moving into retail and you know,

I was telling a friend, do you know how scary it is to be in your forties and to wake up every day
and not know how to do the thing right? At this life stage, we feel like we've got it on auto. Yeah.
We know how to do whatever our thing is. And I appreciate now how I had to really expand,

right. And expand in this new area and learn something new. But that's also a hard thing to do
when you're at a certain life stage where it's, it in your mind, you're like, things should be getting
easier. Why would I add this thing that's a little more difficult? But I think we constantly have to
be in that space of being curious,

whatever that means. What is the story? I actually don't know the story of how you ended up
doing products. How did you end up in retail? So Like everything, I mean, listen, I, I have a
person who built a business off of networking and I ended up in a network where I met someone
who was very senior at Target and she called me up one day and said,

I think we should be in business together. And this was in 2019 where I wasn't, again, we talked
about where I was in 2019 and so I wasn't ready. But then when I cleared everything right and
got rid of everything, then I made the call and said, okay, I'm ready to have a conversation. And
what I really wanted to do,

I knew there was one thing I loved at that time in my life and it was middle grade and I had just
sold the audio rights of my first series. And I thought, you know, I wish I had been able to do
more of that. So in a way I was almost grieving it. I had Mackenzie Blue was a success, but I
was still really deep in marketing.

So it was like, well that did so well and I wish I could have done more. And so my first foray into
Target was actually a middle grade and with a mandate to really focus on diversifying middle
grade fiction and the time, you know, less than 10% of protagonists were actually protagonists
of color. And so I thought for me personally, I,

I grew up reading a book a day in the summer. I, and, and I'm talking like Goosebumps, sweet
Valley High, the really good stuff. Same right. Sters Club, I was here for it, I was like done with
the academic reading and I was here for what I wanted in the summer. Yeah. Which was like the
good stuff.

And that is what I write. And it is so fun and so gratifying. But I was, I said, okay, I wanna do
more of it. Yeah. Did I think we would do 14 books together in three years? No, but Covid
happened, right? Yeah. So imagine committing to this in 2019 and having this really rough year
in 2019.

And then I get to 2020 and it's like easy breezy for me, you know? And everybody else I'm like, I
wish we could have collectively, like I had my meltdown on my own and then 2020 happened

and I was off and writing a lot and you know, my first book ended up in stores in December, which that was the, In December of 2020.

Of 2020. Wow. It was, I, that's a quick turnaround for traditional Publishing. Four months. My writing partner and I had four months to get this done. And it was, we got a call and the call was so Covid d's really covid right now. And all the blockbusters that were supposed to happen aren't happening. And so the toys that would come from those blockbusters aren't coming.

So here's an opportunity if you can get this done and, and you know, we, you'll get more promo than a book's ever got. And then sure enough, I got the back cover of the weekly ad when it was still printed. I mean, when I first started working with Target, those weekly ads were still printed. And so my parents went and they were like,

oh my gosh, it was incredible to see what we got for the Z files. I ended up doing a spinoff of my first series and then we did two other series together. There was honest June about a girl who can't tell a lie. So it's a little supernatural. And that was a lot of fun to get into fantasy. And that honest June is still doing so well.

And then my last series at Target was called The Stitch Click and it's about a tight-knit group of friends and five very different girls who meet at a fashion sewing class. And so, you know, my last book debuted a few months ago. And so, and then in between that we went in and did the Elevation approach the book and the workbook. Yeah.

And so it was a lot of writing and I definitely needed the elevation approach. And it was in that process as I was selling books and dealing with buyers that then I was asked about possibly doing my own imprint. And the feedback I got was, well, what if you actually did product? And I never thought it would be product for me in my brand.

I thought I would curate other people who were experts in different zones of genius and build brands around them. And when the mandate came back that was like, no, we want your brand free. Me too. I Was like, oh, you Know, as a marketer we're Like, We drive it behind the scenes. So it was really tough for me to go into that like spotlight.

And in middle grade you can hide behind your characters. Totally. They're the stars, right? So that piece was hard. But as a marketer, I've always loved product. I've just loved selling other people's product. And so to then be on the side of actually building a good product and taking that research and what I knew about what consumers wanted and how to talk to them and put all that together was really exciting to do that.

So you've done a pro, well you did the Elevation Approach and and the product line that goes with it. Yes. Yes. And then your travel Line. Yes. Wander Lane. Yes. Which I love. It's so beautiful. Thank you. Thank you. And now in this process you've learned so much about, I mean obviously you knew about product before from your time at BMG and now you are talking more about conscious Commerce.

Commerce Yes. Conscious commerce. Yes. And what is conscious commerce and what did you learn that you wanna now bring this new body of work and consciousness to retail? Yeah, so when I started in retail, what I quickly realized was there are a lot of secrets in retail, right? There are the people who know the things and everybody else who doesn't know how the sausage is made,

right? And I was getting into it and just kept asking more and more questions, but why, right? And I'm always gonna be a researcher at heart. Why do we do things this way? Why is this the way that it happens? Does it have to be this way? And you know, there were so many mandates that I think came after 2020 and reckonings in so many different ways,

right? And I think one of the things that happened was this mandate around diversifying retail. And what happens a lot when you create programs really fast, right? And I would say almost when you're creating something that you were not the actual consumer of, you don't always get it right? Because if you are not an entrepreneur yet, you're trying to create a roadmap for entrepreneurs,

it's a little hard, right? Because, you know, we don't live in a 15th and 30th paycheck world, right? So it's different when you do and think about what it takes and then when you're also talking about going into large retail, right? There are a lot of rules around how you have to do things. There are a lot of terms that are thrown around that you have to learn.

And what I realized after I deeply been in this world for three years is, oh, I had to build my own kind of handbook and I wanna make it easier for others because I think that a retail landscape that is diverse, that has product that represents everyone is great. But I don't think it's great from this. Like, aren't we good people for doing it?

I think it's, the marketer in me says that the, the brand has to always be in service to the customer. And if the needs of a customer are evolving and changing, then we as the brand owners need to evolve and change. Not because we're being kind, but because it's good business. Right? And so if how women work is changing,

that means how we talk to them as advertisers needs to change, right? If women are saying, I want a different way of, of being in my home, right? It's not the days of the 1990s Clorox commercials, right? That's like, Hey mom, when you do the laundry, hey, there are a lot of families where dad is doing the laundry,

right? And in my household, my dad cooked dinner more nights during the week than my mom. And my mom was an amazing cook, but she took the big meals on the weekends, right? Yeah. And so it, the need to change I think is not diversity for diversity's sake, right? And there are so many conversations and culture right now about diversity.

And what I say often is a person who grew up in sales and marketing is we have to be of service to our customer. And when we start to put the customer into a bucket of only mattering because they check a box, that's not being in service to the money that they are spending, right? Yeah. So one of the things I've been saying a lot this year is,

you know, I refuse to ask for a seat at the table that I have built and paid for. And I mean that as a customer. Yeah. Right? Because if you look around your boardrooms and they don't actually look like the people who are buying your product, then your DEI is not a service that you're doing because you're kind, right? When you are running businesses,

you have a fiduciary responsibility to grow your bottom line. And that is done through being of service to your customer, right? So if you're an airline, you service your customers better, you grow your market share, it should be no different, right? And that's where my biggest takeaway from retail is understanding and hoping that consumers understand the power they have.

Right? And one of the things I like to say is we have to shop our values. Yes, we can do that at big retail. There are so many small businesses at the targets in Walmarts and like there are so many small businesses, you wouldn't believe how small they are. There are one or 2, 3, 3 people who are running these companies and just knowing about them,

right? Yeah. Going in and saying, oh, I can buy an eye cream that's owned by, you know, a woman who has seven children. And like there are those amazing stories that retail, we just need to tap into them. You know? And I love that. I didn't know that. Oh yes. Until right now, I mean obviously like you are a small business owner,

so of course it makes sense when I ask my husband for your bag for Christmas, it would support, I mean, I know in a tiny way, but still it's like, yes, big way. It's supporting a small business. I didn't even think about that. I love that. Thank you. Yeah. And there's so many, and so I think often we look at this through lens of like,

retail is bad and this is bad. It's like, no, there's so many great things happening. But what we have to really understand is our dollars matter every time we are spending a dollar, it matters. And it is not to say don't spend it at Amazon. Guess what? There are a lot of women who became very wealthy through affiliate coats,

right? Who can live the life they want and they are showing you great products and they're improving your life and they're making, and it's just being conscious of that and saying, how do I consciously wanna deploy the money I have? My money matters. I work very hard for my money. Yes. And I wanna give that gift of my money to someone else and show that their business matters too.

Right? And a few years ago, a girlfriend challenged me, she said, you should buy from more female, small business owners if you have to dress up for certain appearances, be conscious

about the brands, because that really matters. And I remember thinking, I didn't, I didn't think about that. It really matters. And now it really matters when someone says,

where did you get your dress? Or it's like, oh, that's Ola Johnson. And she's a small, yes. You are such a supporter of her brand. You're always wearing Ola Johnson. I, and It's creative and will it cost you a little more? Yes. But we're all change, like we're choosing where we're spending our money, right?

So there might be something where you're like, okay, I'm gonna make my coffee at home and I'm gonna then save some money. And, but when you start to think about the fact that like my target run, I could, I mean, I've thought about doing like a target run or it's showing you all the female and black-owned business that you would be surprised,

Right? I would watch that video. Like There's so many, like I, I mean, and there are other people who do a great job. I mean Target while black. She's amazing. Yes. I'm like, wow. But Sephora, like, there are so many places where we can go and spend money and it isn't changing a big footprint,

it's just understanding, right? So there's a part of what I'm doing that I really wanna educate people around how they can shop their values and the idea that their, that your dollar really matters. And then for people who wanna get into retail and wanna understand how to do business with the targets of the world, I wanna give a roadmap to make it easier than it was for me.

I love that. It's so generous. It's so generous. And it's also just very smart because these big companies, the big places, the big retailers are not going anywhere. No. And so for people like you and I who are really conscious of where we spend our money, and I will be honest, like I've had a feeling of guilt of like I could go,

you know, I could go find it at Etsy, I could go whatever, and then I'm being lazy. And now I know without changing my behavior wildly I can redirect my spending within that same large retailer to support on a smaller level somebody. Yes. Who I really believe in uplifting. So that's excellent. Now from, so that's from a consumer side and I always say make your spending a prayer.

So we are super aligned there on the business owner side. What are the benefits of going into retail? And for somebody who's listening, who would be the kind of ideal person and why would it benefit them and their brand to check out like, you know, co-branding align at Target or something like that? So first of all, what retail and big business does really,

really well, it's their systems and processes, right? They may seem arduous, but if you can build for target, you can build for anyone in the world and it's gonna be a great safe product that hits the shelves because it has to be right. So that rigor and understanding everything down to, you know, your barcodes to the copy, to,

I mean, I remember the first time my team and it was two of us, and we had to input every thing that went into a notebook. I didn't believe all the pieces that go into a construct like what percentage of your paper is metal? I didn't even know that that was a thing. Right. So it makes you really understand how that happens.

Yeah. And it teaches you so much about how a product gets to the shelf and all the things that you never think you have to think about. Like tariffs. And I remember two Christmases ago, right? Covid was having a little bit of an outbreak and I was like, oh my goodness, is the container gonna make it right? Like the things Oh yeah.

Right. That you have to think about. So big retail is good for helping you really get organized. Then it's the exposure to the millions and millions of people that they're bringing into the store every week. And then it's the credibility, right? Right. If you end up on those shelves, you are a credible brand and a credible product because you again have gone through the rigor.

And so it is really worth it to expand the brand. And I think the best hybrids are brands that understand how to be direct to consumer in a way that's smart and understand how to speak to big retail. And if you can do both, you are in such a great place. And I think the person that would really benefit from the conscious commerce accelerator,

you could have launched at retail already and thought I didn't know everything. It wasn't, it wasn't the way I wanted, or I did a smaller footprint, I would like to prepare for big retail. You know, and you might go through the accelerator and say, wow, I didn't know all of those steps and I definitely don't want that. Right?

And I say that in the elevation approach, you know, and a lot, lot of my work, if I can teach you the steps, and if you get to the point of saying, this isn't for me, think about all the mental space you've freed up. Totally. Because then you're not thinking about, and when I launch, you're gonna say,

so that's off the table. I know everything it would take and that's not gonna work. But I still wanna build a really solid D two C business. You know, we're gonna teach, teach you What does D two C mean, direct To consumer. Okay, Thank you. So, so all see the term is what Happens, like become clear,

because I've never been in corporate, I'm like, It's like when I was in a meeting and it's like our OOS needs to I, and I was like, I'm sorry. Well, hello. I don't understand any of that. It, so I, I think it's so helpful that you said that because one of the things that I really loved is how you speak about letting go and how you speak about letting go really without regret.

So last, not last year, in 2022, we invested 30 grand in building out an app that, and we did all this whole thing. And then in the end I just was like, you know what? Very per your process, I mean, I didn't have the process at the time, but I really asked myself the questions and I was like,

I'm gonna just decide that that was an investment in my education and we are not building this app. Never say never. But it was really helpful to close that door and regain my mental energy and my creativity for other directions and just be like, this is not gonna be for me right now. And I didn't have any regrets about that money spent. I just was like,

you know, there's more where that came from. It was a good investment in my education. When you have gone down the road, you talk actually about your possible having a baby journey. And I'm sure there are other examples as well. Like when you've gone down the road of doing a project that then does not come to fruition, how do you let go of that without carrying it around as this heavy burden of regret or what could have been because it,

it, it doesn't seem like, you know, I don't know you super well, but I know you like well enough, you don't have a lot of heaviness around those things in your energetic Space. Yeah, thank, I don't, but I had to learn a process to grief. Yeah. I think what we don't allow ourselves to do in our culture is to experience the grief.

Right? And I talked about grieving my agency for months. I didn't know at the time I was grieving. Now I go through a process of this is hard. I do not like this. I, I feel like I'm failing at this, but I have to grieve it and I make myself confront it. And what's great about it is then you move on from it.

But if you're not facing it, it's always chasing you. Right? And so it's a time where you're like, we're gonna deal with this head on and it's gonna be a little messy for a minute. I'm gonna be in my feelings for a minute and then we're gonna, I'm gonna be able to, and I talk myself through that too. I have to like,

this is not gonna feel you're feeling uncomfortable. You don't wanna feel this and we're gonna feel it and then we're gonna be done feeling it. You know? And I think you have to, I talk about creating rituals, have a ritual of how you grieve something, you know, but it's that process. And I often use the example of like romanticizing opening a cupcake shop,

right? And you just, if I had only my life would've been so different and you know, my first course, the Elevation Approach for business, I, you know, I teach, and that's what I taught at Orton, is how to start a business from scratch. And I would always say, I wanna teach you the language of this and I want you to be able to work through your mind so quickly,

all the stages of doing the thing. And if you arrive at I'm so glad I didn't do it, that's a win, right? Yes. And it's like, I'm glad I didn't open that shop. I would've been stuck every day. I wouldn't have been able to have the life and travel. And then you're like, oh, that was actually not the thing I wanted to do.

But until we work through it, it's that it's taking up so much space of if only it could have, right? So if you're a person that's like, but big retail is it, and you go through by Accelerator and you're like, it's not it for me. You're free. You're free to go figure out what is it. And if it is it for you,

now you have a handbook, you have a short, you can start looking up the terms. 'cause I'm gonna put every term in there for you so you're gonna know what they all mean. And you're gonna walk in saying, I'm ready. Right? I've done the work, I know that this is gonna be hard, but I'm ready and I am equipped.

Right? And that's always my goal with whatever I'm creating. I wanna equip and inspire people and, and they both go hand in hand. And that's the guidebook, right? Where, and this for me is the guidebook. So when people say, you know, elevation Approach came about because a friend said, how do you get your ideas out of your head?

And I thought, well, I do have a process. And it really got me thinking about what it is. And it's like, well here now you can have this process too. Yeah. And it really is written as a followable process. I mean, it's like a workbook and the questions that you have people ask themselves are so powerful because we can get so stuck in our own,

just in our own minds. And the minute you ask yourself a powerful question, you see the world and you see your situation completely differently. So I love that you have those in there. One of the things you start off the book with and then travels throughout is the importance of having a relationship with your body. And you've mentioned it a couple of times during the interview,

like how important your body is and, and connecting in with the feelings in your body, using your body for your creativity, all these different things. So I'm curious, I know that there's a very big difference between the moment I turn the final product of a book in and the moment I'm end up ending up talking about it. It's like a long time in between there.

And when did this come out? March, 2023. March, 2023. Okay. So we're like nine months out. What, what are you diving into now in relationship with your body? Are there any particular rituals or wellness practices that you're trying on? Like what's, what's happening now with you and your wellness and your health and, and your relationship with your body? Well,

okay, I, we know each other well enough, as you've said, but again, I have talked about being a research person. Yes. Is very factual. Right? So a lot of the way I process the world in my mind is quite analytical. But then I'm sure my coach would say, you're a little less analytical than you give yourself credit for,

but I'm in this place of being in a very uncomfortable place. Right? When I knew that I'd done what I wanted to do at big retail in the way I'd done it for me. Right. I, I'm a person, like I said, who likes to be behind the scenes. So I knew two big brands in one year was like, I've done the thing that's a huge,

I'm like, okay, this is gonna be my, my not To mention a book. I mean, I, I know that the book was part of one of those brands. Yeah. But still like Hello, but still also a book. Right. And I still had middle grade books coming out. Yeah. And so I knew I was going through another trans transition,

and again, I talked about being prepared this time, right. So I hired the coach and, and Yadi really said, Tina, this is going to be like a birthing process. And I thought, oh, here we go. Okay. So we're not gonna be in my head on this one. Okay. And so it's become months and months of really being in my body in a way that is not my normal process.

And also understanding nature in a way that I thought, I'm like, I love nature, I love to be in it, but really getting in it and understanding all of the different, I mean, and then I went to your retreat, which was even more of just getting into, really getting into the things that I was like, I need to be in all of this and I have to just like keep myself calm.

Right? Yeah. And so it's been a lot of, I think when we think of corporate, I can only define it as like, we're thinking of it in a very masculine energy way. And I think when you are in creation right, and you're creating the next thing that demands a more of a feminine energy Yeah. To birth that, right?

It's the birthing energy. And to be in that is to be in a place where things have to be a little more serendipitous, right? You have to be open to your signs that are coming. It is sitting with things that are more uncomfortable for me, right? There are those of us who could be so comfortable in the feminine energy, but then,

you know, going more into corporate or something, it's very scary for them, like to have to take on that. So it's been a lot of learning and just really the exploration. But I talk a lot about, like, I, my principle of getting curious is probably my favorite one, because just the expansion is there and I love the digging deep and being more curious and what does this mean?

And you know, there's a lot of wonder in that. Yeah. Right? And you become very childlike, like, well, what does the divine feminine mean? And what does this mean? And who is this person and what is this? You know? Then I start reading more books and it's like one thing leads to another thing, but it isn't the most comfortable place.

And I share that very honestly, because I think sometimes people come on and you feel like, well, they just have it together. And it's like, there are times we're called to do things or to go deeper, and it isn't the most comfortable or the default, but what you can create on the other side is what you need, right? So sometimes we have to lean into something that feels a little uncomfortable because you're gonna get the results that you're looking for.

A hundred percent. Yeah. And I think sometimes, you know, you spoke about the hustle culture earlier. I think sometimes the conversation around like anti hustles culture or like, you know,

leaning into more ease, more pleasure can be misunderstood as you're not supposed to be uncomfortable anymore. Yep. And there is a lot of value to being uncomfortable, but like,

we don't need to like overcomplicate our lives just to like manufacture discomfort. Exactly. It's gonna show up. It'll be there. It'll be there if you, You don't have to do anything, it's coming for You. Okay. So I have two more questions for you. One, I was just really interested in this part in the book where you talked about the difference between authenticity and transparency.

Yeah. And you said you're like really authentic, you know, across the board in, in your various relationships, but you're not transparent with everyone. And I thought that was fascinating. Something I have been developing over the course of my life is healthy discernment. And I like this part of myself. However, it also has a shadow, which is I just assume that everyone has my best interest in mind until they prove otherwise.

And the older I get the realize, the more I realize that is not the case. And so I, and when I read that, I was like, I wanna ask Tina more about the, what you see as the difference between authenticity and transparency, and then who gets to have the transparency and why? Oh, this is a great question. So I actually got that principle from my pastor and,

and he's a genius guy. This guy, Dr. Darius Daniels. And remember, you know, I like data, so I really love that. You know, he went to divinity school at Princeton, but he is also very with the Times and an entrepreneur. And he wrote a book that really transformed my life years ago called Relational Intelligence. And his principal's like,

listen, our relationships are what drive our life. And if we don't have everybody in our life in the right place and don't understand what that relationship should be doing energetically in every way, then we're going to be hurt in ways that aren't appropriate given what the relationship is. Meaning if everybody's your friend, right? Like the definition of a friend is like,

you are willing to die for your friend. So maybe people you're calling friends are associates, and maybe when an associate does something that's not so great, it doesn't wound you the way a dear friend would. I love this, right? So much. And so one of his things, he's like, you have to, you should always be authentic with everyone,

but transparent with very few people. And when I started to think about that, you know, if any people like us who have to be very public, quite often I want, I want to be authentic to every person, right? But understanding where to dive deep. And I, I, I always wanna show up as myself. I always wanna have an authentic conversation.

I always want to be in the moment. But when I'm dealing with very deep things, I've found that there are probably three people that I can bring that to for different reasons, right? If you are an employer, you're not gonna go to someone who's on your team like, well, I'm deep in crisis about whether to keep this company going or not.

That's their job. How are they going to give You so inappropriate? It's not Appropriate, right? So, so it also makes you really manage how you are dealing with, and then if I call someone my friend, that means no matter the time, day or night, I am there for you. I can't agree to that for a hundred people,

right? And, and, and that's inauthentic for me to even present that I'm available that way, right? I'm the oldest of six children, my siblings are five of my dearest friends. So I'm first and foremost showing up for them no matter what that means, right? With my parents, you know, my parents live across the street from me now.

So my mom came back from a trip sick. What was I doing? Making food and bringing it over, right? Because that's the priority of that relationship. And, and then there are those that we mentor, right? Who might be what is considered an assignment, right? That I understand. But now I understand that I'm not coming to you for you to pour into me in that way.

I understand that. I wanna do that for you. Right? So I think just however you take this, it's like if you really focus your relationships and focus on what you wanna give and what your expectations are, it's gonna set you up for success, right? The messiness is not going to be there, but then it's just a reminder that you can and should be authentic.

Always show up as yourself. It's just how much of yourself you have to give that relationship. Yeah. That is what opens up the possibility of being really wounded, right? Yeah. When you're just overgiving or oversharing and maybe the person on the other side doesn't actually wanna take all of that on. Totally. We're just assuming that they do. You know,

so it creates great engagement for everybody too, when we're all properly managing that. Yeah. And it's such healthy energy management, which is, you know, one of my favorite things to think about in practice. Thank you for that explanation. So helpful. Finally, if you were to be able to go back in time and tell your 18 to 22-year-old self,

somewhere in that range, something, some piece of wisdom around money that you would want her to know, what would you share? Oh, that's a really good one. Or Possibly it's something you would wanna share with your nieces now. Oh, Oh goodness. If I could share this with Phoebe, I, oh, I think I already shared it with Phoebe.

Okay, great. Because she said it back to me and I couldn't believe it. And she said, well, aunt Tina, you taught me to ask for what I want. I said, but not me. I was talking about other people not ask me for what you want. And that's not the lesson. You know, it's so funny. We are so happy to be in the game at that age that we aren't showing up for ourselves for what we want.

Right. And I think it's, again, the book asks you to be so thoughtful about what you want, that you can be so clear. Yeah. Right. Sometimes we don't even know what we want. And so I think I would've told her, told myself at that age to get so clear, it is a practice I have with my niece from a very young age of being very clear about how I have the life I have,

how what I've done to earn that. And being really clear that I want you to always ask for what you want. I want you to get used to that muscle of saying, I'm here, I'm taking up space, I have value, and this is what that value looks like. And so I think I just didn't know how to navigate that. I was so happy to be in the game at that age.

Yeah. And I realize now when I look back, oh, I left a lot of money on the table that I didn't realize I was leaving on the table because I was so happy to be at the table. Where again, now me in my early forties, it's like, I bought and paid for that table and you should be happy I'm here.

Right. It's a different vibe, but you go through decades of earning up to that. Right. Me too. So I think it's the muscle, but we, we were just not taught to exercise that muscle. I think we were all part of a group of women who were young and able to explore what we wanted because our moms honestly had frankly been like,

we were the latchkey generation where our moms started the work right where they went in. And so they were just so happy to say, we're outside of the home and we're doing these things and we're exploring and we're able to have these careers that I think we were just happy to do what we loved and not thinking yet about money. And what I love about the youngest generation,

my goodness, these women have figured out how to explore creativity. They want the way that they want, but how to get paid. Like they understand their value in a way that it's just, it's part of, it's built into who they are, right? No one needs to tell them that they're valuable. They understand right from birth that I have value,

the things I create are valuable and I need to be paid and compensated for that. And I think I wish I knew that at 18. I love that. I love that piece. Thank you so much, Tina. Thank you. I've learned a lot from you today. This was really fun. This was so fun. Thank you. Thank you for diving in.

So if people wanna connect with your work, get your books, check out your products, learn more about your accelerator, where should they go? At tina.wells.com. And I'll be posting a lot on my Instagram also, which is just at Tina Wells. Okay, perfect. Thank you for being here today. Thank you, Kate. I appreciate you.

Thank you so much for listening into this episode of Plenty. I personally am going to really be thinking about that line between authenticity and transparency, and also really thinking about the process of creating our goals, taking an idea into fruition, and actually having a process for it. Like what would happen in your life if it wasn't just random? Right? How much more creative could you be?

How much more powerful could you be? How much energy could you conserve and redirect? So I hope you enjoyed this conversation as much as I did. If you did, please go ahead and subscribe to Plenty. Rate the show, leave us a review, text a friend the link to the episode. Let them know how powerful it was and what they might get out of it.

And thank you always for listening. I can't wait to see you on the next episode. Woo-hoo. You made it to the end of an episode of Plenty. Don't you Feel expanded already? So if you liked this episode, go ahead and leave us a review. Subscribe to the podcast, text a Friend and let them know they need to listen in.

That helps us spread the word so more people can experience plenty together. And if you want to ease your path to creating wealth, I created a money Breakthrough Guide for you where I interviewed over 20 of my high earning women friends, and I asked them what their biggest money breakthrough guide was. And the responses were so mind blowing and helpful. I knew I needed to pass them along to you.

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