

Casey: first off will you give me your first and last name and your pronouns

Diann Wingert: Diann Wingert And it's she/her

Casey: Awesome Diann I am thrilled to have you on the show today we were just talking about the pre-chat happens before these shows and I was on your episode on your podcast last year in a very different vein So it's very fun for both of us to make this pivot have this conversation you are a mindset coach entrepreneurial mindset coach correct Correct Yes And you come from a background of psychotherapy

Diann Wingert: Not personal professional actually that's not true I have definitely drank the Kool-Aid and served it for many years I was a psychotherapist a professor of social work a teacher of fellow therapist and also someone who was in and out of therapy myself

Casey: Okay So really all realms of this So tell me a little bit real quick like what does resilience What does it mean to you What does it look like to

Diann Wingert: you Well it just so happens that this topic resilience resiliency has probably been the thing that has most fascinated me throughout my entire life starting from childhood where I am now And I think because I'm in a constant state of personal and professional evolution what it means to me now is when Everything that happens in your life is something that you use to evolve yourself Sometimes it's conscious Sometimes it's unconscious sometimes it's subconscious but even though I'm not a huge fan of Tony Robbins for all the reasons we won't get into this quote I have to attribute to him Life is not happening to you Life is happening for you I think ultimately that's really aligned with my personal definition of resilience Shit happens It happens to you It happens to everybody but if you're resilient it somehow propels you to grow Yeah and I think that's it Like it's a bounce back ability factor You go down you don't stay down And when you come back up you're bolder braver stronger more courageous more honest more compassionate I think resilience allows you to keep evolving and getting better at least that seems to be the way it has worked for me and the people I know who

Casey: I love that approach because so often when I read about resilience or you look at just kind of the straight definition in the dictionary it's this kind of like bounce back to where you were It's this like return to status quo Whereas to me I a hundred percent agree that it's this like Not I might not even go through where I was before I might ricochet a different direction but I'm gonna bounce higher and I'm going to take something out of that most recent fall And I love that nuance but it's not just back to where we were before

Diann Wingert: You know I think because we both have a mental health background professional training and education around that I think it was ultimately Casey One of the primary reasons why I am no longer a threat oppressed because the goal of therapy is recovery The goal of therapy And it's stated in any treatment plan in any diagnostic workup the goal of therapy is to take you from an impaired Symptomatic place and restore you to your previous functioning But for a lot of people their previous functioning was the result of even further back

trauma and deficits So Sometimes your previous functioning is not the benchmark to hit Sometimes you really do need to go beyond that And there are people who when they bounce back like you said they ricocheted you're probably familiar with the term post-traumatic growth and I think that's what we're talking about

Casey: Yeah definitely Definitely I think that's another really good name for it So is this nature versus nurture

Diann Wingert: Ah ah I just knew to cut right to the chase on that You just had to go right there You know I I love a deep conversation that just you just land in it immediately There's not a whole lot of home not a whole lot of foreplay That's kind of the way I roll to you know this is I think because I'm adopted And I grew up in a strange situation of a bunch of adopted kids who were then abused by the adoptive parent So I always wondered about that now in my past there were two biologicals in the family and there were at one point there were a total of 10 kids adopted not fosters and we all had different backgrounds came from different No biological parents So it would be really hard to know but from the basis of the 10 of us we all got differing doses of the same neglect and abuse And we came from different biological backgrounds I tend to think it may I hate to say this may be more nature because We've both witnessed many people Who've had difficult circumstances whether we're talking military trauma family abuse trauma rape you know and there's big T and little T there are things that are traumatizing like microaggressions that people of color and gender nonconforming people experience on a daily basis And that You you have to develop resilience or you are totally defeated by that So I have a feeling it may be more genetic but when I say I don't like saying that I don't because I am a huge optimist and I choose to believe that no matter what your genetics you can by will by choice and by being resourced Improve your ability not only to cope but to grow So I like to say it's more nature but I I mean nurture but I I have strong suspicions that we have genetic loading that may make it easier for us to be resilient That's my I'm not a scientist but that's okay I kind of think that's that's my answer That's my final answer

Casey: That's a final answer I don't disagree I it makes me think right now the Olympics are going on and there are people who are Olympic level athletes There's definitely a genetic component that puts them ahead of the average person But that doesn't mean that there aren't people who don't Like I got two left feet but if I danced for five hours every day I'm sure I could still become an amazing dancer Like I don't have the drive but like I think there is that like some people are more prone to having this ability and then there's others where it's like okay this isn't natural to me but I'm not going to stay where I'm at So I'm going to find the resources I'm going to find the people I'm going to do the work To change the situation I'm in

Diann Wingert: Well you've been on my podcast the driven woman And one of the things I ask my guests about is where they think their drive came from I have an episode coming up soon I'm calling it something to prove because and I think this goes hand in hand with resiliency too Casey because I think for example I've worked with and know Many people over time where their drive to Excel came from the fact that they're a person of color and no one expects them

to succeed and that something to prove newness you know propels them There are other people who have a physical limitation One of my favorite clients is an amputee And she is a total bad-ass athlete professional entrepreneur college professor So I think sometimes there are things that a person would not be able to deal with And other times it's the very thing that propels them What gets that party started in the mind in the brain Sometimes I think having mentors Having coaches having even parents if things happen early in life to give you the opportunity to think differently about your circumstances But there's no question that some people are more Sensitive by nature more pessimistic by nature more inclined to brooding and sadness by nature I years ago I used to do neurofeedback as an adjunct to psychotherapy And I did three assessments before I ever applied electrodes to people One was an assessment of their sensitivity their neurologic sensitivity Second was an assessment of their reactivity So when a stimulus is applied how much does their nervous system react And the third assessment was of their hardiness and hardiness basically means When something disrupts you from your normal functioning how long does it take you to get back to normal And I still to this day don't do neurofeedback anymore I don't work with people in person face-to-face anymore but sensitivity reactivity and hardiness Those are Baked in they are neuro-biological and I do think they determine at least in part how resilient you are because if you're born sensitive reactive and not very Hardy it's going to be much harder for you to become resilient

Casey: That makes so much sense right Yeah I guess I've always yeah I've always looked at resilience as kind of this outside abstract this trait but when you break it down more to like those components it's like oh yeah like those I wouldn't argue are Mm inherited they're their character traits There is something you're more or less born as with

Diann Wingert: right They're organic And actually they can be scientifically measured Like for example if you think about like little kids some kids you can tickle and you can tease and you can like provoke a little bit and they'll come right back at you Right some kids will say don't talk to me like that I don't like that You're a mean And some kids will just dissolve in tears and you know and shaking and all that I don't think those are personality traits And let's assume all of those kids haven't been traumatized Haven't been abused They're not growing up in a war zone you know neurologically neuro-biological Some humans are more sensitive some are more reactive and some are less Hardy And I think anyone I believe can learn to become more resilient but they would have a lot harder time of it And I think that can take some of the guilt or shame out of it because sometimes I think we can I worry about this with myself as a coach I'm a mindset coach and I help people improve Their business and their life by changing the way they think about their potential their competition their clients what what they're capable of and so forth But you can't talk yourself out of your biology Yeah No amount of mindset work no amount of manifesting no amount of vision boarding or any of the other things we might no acupuncture treatment no no pills or herbs or Your biology depends Now can you learn how to be more tolerant by training yourself to face fears to face things that you feel uncomfortable with to try things that are outside of your comfort zone you and I both know Yes

Casey: absolutely Absolutely Yeah But when you look back at your childhood could did you in that point in time could you look around and go like why am I turning out different than my siblings Or was this more of a after the fact you look back and I was like oh I I handled that better than they did

Diann Wingert: I could tell it Yeah I could tell my adoptive mother was abusive and mentally unstable And so I began to observe her I began to observe what kind of behaviors in my sibling set her off and which ones that you know kind of what she liked and what she didn't like times of day things Like I was basically just trying to keep myself safe and out of her Target zone But my ability to notice those things my ability to pay attention to those things my somehow instinctive awareness of how to manage my own safety I think was evidence of my resiliency And because my siblings didn't have those same abilities they Oftentimes we're more victimized by her than I was And as a result I developed a pretty bad case of what others refer to as survivor guilt because all I could really do was save myself Casey All I could really do was survive my childhood And grow up and get there but I was a kid and so I couldn't really save my siblings I would sometimes say why do you do that You know what happens or you know just don't take the bait or whatever but it didn't really land And so I I've always felt guilty that I couldn't really do anything for my siblings but at the time I didn't really understand why they weren't able to see things the way I did

Casey: That makes sense if we had some email exchanges when we were setting up this interview and one of the things that you've mentioned was that you learned to become like a perfection And an overachiever is this kind of some of that result in an effort to also keep yourself safe You got really good at positioning yourself and that carried forward in life

Diann Wingert: Absolutely In fact I will say that's why I like that Tony Robbins quote life isn't happening to you It's happening for you now You know being a perfectionist there are some times people will In a way like humble brag about being a perfectionist like in a job interview tell us your strengths and tell us you know your downside So well my don't so is I'm going to be a perfectionist It's like oh okay I get it I mean legitimately being a perfectionist that's no fun because nothing's ever good enough You never you know nothing you write is ever good enough nothing you say you go back and rethink it You're constantly bothering yourself about thinking you said or did the wrong thing It's no fun But the perfectionism that I experienced was I was determined to not give her any reason to target me So I cleaned my room I didn't make a lot of noise I didn't make a lot of mess I didn't create any extra work for her I got good grades I was determined to be a kid that she would be proud of because she You know I guess had some sort of expectations that we were all supposed to make her look good and feel good and reflect reflect positively on her which I think is an unconscious motivation of most people who have kids whether they realize it or not And and that but I think you know for her there was a real steep cost to not measuring up And what I realized is that it served me well because yes it did mean I got less Physical abuse I didn't get any less emotional or verbal I got less physical abuse at home because I didn't trigger her as much But at school my teachers liked me when you're good stuff When you're an eager learner when you turn in your homework you're not a

behavior problem My teachers liked me So the benefit there was I got less abuse at home and I got approval And acceptance from my teachers that I wasn't getting at home And I leveraged the hell out of that because it was the one place that I felt good about myself And I didn't do quite as well with my peers because I just couldn't relate so much to other kids And I think you know this having experienced trauma and trauma recovery and post-traumatic growth yourself you can feel a little bit like an alien You you can feel like you don't really Fit so well with other people they don't have the same perspective the same And even when you explain things they look at you and say wow wow that that's that just must be so hard They just don't know what to think But when you talk to someone else who's experienced traumatic things and recovery there's an unspoken understanding That's very deep

Casey: Yeah it's interesting I find sorry I find myself in this constant dilemma of the veterans community can be insanely toxic because the military is insanely toxic And so I don't want anything to do with the veterans community but ultimately We speak the same language when it comes to trauma And so there's that like sometimes I have to turn to them cause they're the only ones who get my dark humor and that kind of same Yeah It's like you're saying is even like for us like very different traumas but there There's an understanding There's a more empathy there than you know I remember when I first got home to the states and I was started hanging out with my friends again and I was trying to explain what was going on in my brain And it was just kind of yeah That I could never do that I didn't choose to do it And like the things they were upset about and I was just like Nope I am an alien in my own world It's time to venture on

Diann Wingert: It can make you not well suited for most social situations The things that other people are engaged and entertained by Triggered by you know I mean just the things that that just the nonsense conversations that go on on social media and so forth I it's like I did not survive everything I survived for this Like this is just what we're talking about Right So I think there's almost like I don't know if it's a mature maturing that happens or if it's I don't know I said what do you think

Casey: I I think I think when the trauma comes at a younger age then there's this like maturing catch up thing I remember Cause I got back to the United States when I was 19 and I was in my late twenties hanging out with my family and I said something and both my mom and my brother were like Casey's back And there was this like ten year like seven year lag between The trauma of being in Iraq and where I actually kind of was socially my age again where like like most of my twenties I didn't fit in in my twenties because I was dealing with life or death memories and severe PTSD And my friends were worried about like getting a date Friday night like yeah And so it was like by the time I got I don't know maybe more people in my life finally got exposed to trauma that it leveled the playing field or maybe my trauma was now well enough managed that I was able to go back and look at just enjoyment not frivolous things but everything didn't have to be so hard So I I don't know which way it levels We both probably Yeah

Diann Wingert: I think

Casey: yeah But I remember there was a very distinct moment that my mom still remembers that all of a sudden it was like She's finally her own age again She said she always joked that I I was 18 when I left in 32 when I came home because of just kind of my outlook on the world was so dramatically shifted having to deal with life and death So dramatic you know so head on for for over a year that yeah

Diann Wingert: You know I think we're kind of indirectly talking about an aspect of resiliency that I think is important but yeah And come to mind until just now And that is the ability to reflect on the past with humor as well as acceptance We're not like fighting it anymore it it has a place in our life And I think the humor whether it's the gallows humor the dark humor or the black humor whatever we want to however it's referred to the ability to I mean I worked in a pediatric hospital and saw so many heartbreaking things and I had so many people tell me I could never do that or perhaps not but I wasn't looking at the heartache and the death and the deforming And I wasn't looking at that I was looking at what can we do to help this person and adapt and adjust That was another great example of some of these kids came through Like cancer treatment for example losing limbs losing large parts of their childhood to being chronically hospitalized and so forth Some of them came through so beautifully and many of them didn't and some of the kids came through much better than their families did and their parents did so but I think the kids that could and the adults that can use humor In the moment and later to reflect I think I that's something I would look for Like if I were to say okay where do I find the resilient people Obviously there are people who have experienced it But I think when they they're not just coping they they've evolved and grown beyond I I remember wondering earlier in my life before I'd gone through two divorces before I raised a child with a serious mental illness before many different things had happened in my adult life But I remember thinking after my childhood yeah Wouldn't it have been nice or wouldn't it have been great if I would have been adopted by nice people normal people mentally healthy people but as life has progressed Casey I no longer think that way I I am grateful for all of the circumstances of my life because I wouldn't get to be this baddy if I hadn't and all of those things Assisted in my growth but I did at one time envy people who had comfortable safe childhoods and lives now honestly come get all judgment here I think of them as limited Yeah

Casey: I agree People ask me very often If I could go back and do it all over again would I have still joined the military I said absolutely I wouldn't change anything about my past because I wouldn't be who I am today or where I'm at today And I love that outcome Like if I hadn't if I hadn't joined the military like what else could have gone wrong Like that wouldn't have saved me from trauma Might've just changed what trauma I got exposed to at what age but I am where I am because of what I have endured And when I let go of and you said it when I when I left The personal shame around having PTSD about getting out of the military after I had originally wanted to be career military when I just looked back at it kind of for what it was and for a stage of my life it became a building block instead of a hurdle instead of weight slowing me down then it was like okay cool What can I do differently so that I don't have to experience that again Or What does this change about me in my life And so I'm gonna take a pretty sharp left

turn here but I think you can follow me So one of the big things in my PTSD recovery was I was raised Christian actually wanted to be a chaplain in the military like and I had this conflict of like how does How does bad stuff happen to good people Like why does God let bad stuff happen to good people I think

Diann Wingert: when I look by that name right

Casey: I think there is Yeah And when I let go of my religion and this was like a five-year process but I finally came out as atheist Like there was a very direct my PTSD symptoms and religion for me to separate that life All this stuff no longer had to be resolved because it was just the chaos of the universe And so the left turn here is I know that in your adult years you mentioned having a second divorce and leaving the evangelical church at the same time Like I wanna I want to explore that Like that's take your whole life and dump it upside down in a quick hurry How did you realize that What do you see now on the other side of it all All the big questions

Diann Wingert: Yeah I'd love to because I think that if I hadn't been a resilient person I don't think I could have would have or maybe even imagined doing what I did the year I turned 40 I became aware that I've always been a very much spontaneous in the moment kind of person who really didn't think a whole lot about the future or even where I was on the timeline of my life I've always kind of looked a little younger than I am and probably act quite a bit younger than I am My own kids would tell me I was wearing you know high top converse when they were in middle school And they're like mom No like you're not at teenagers stop Now I have a bright orange pair of doc Martens I'm in my sixties and I might go after yourselves kids I'm going to wear whatever I want Right But I think the year I turned 40 I suddenly realized oh my God my life is half over half over And that thought really propelled me to get really honest with myself about several things I shouldn't be in this marriage Two I shouldn't be in this church or any church because during the time I had been in that marriage 15 years and during the time I had been in the church 20 years I had continued to evolve The name of your podcast something you and I share in terms of our personal values and our philosophy about life continuous personal evolution I had I don't mean to be offensive to anyone who is a believer but I literally feel I had outgrown my need for religion I I chose to become a Christian as an adult Because I knew my childhood didn't prepare me to have any idea whatsoever about what a normal family was So before I got married the first time and started having a family I was attracted to the church and I think it was very obvious to me I want To have a better life than the one I had grown up in I wanted to have a normal family a happy family I wanted to have my own biological relationships I'd never grown up being biologically related to anyone I wanted my own kids And so I joined the church because somehow I thought this is where normal health Happy people are who have a code of conduct who know right from wrong who treat their children well who treat each other Well at least that's that's the marketing right of the church That's the that's the selling you know that's the sales campaign and not because of any moral superiority or anything like that like I didn't know what normal was and I wanted it Yeah I was in the church for you know those years but I'd say the last five to seven years of being in the church I really started having serious doubts And I think what kind of propelled me to the end of the relationship with Christianity was

I had had a previous career in medical sales and I had a serious car accident that left me Permanent injuries to my C spine cervical spine and chronic pain which I've had been living with for over 30 years And I wasn't able to continue on in the medical sales career because it involved an extensive amount of driving and lifting and carrying things So I started doing some volunteer work at a local family services agency and decided I was going to go get a master's degree in social work and go into the social work field So I did once I went to social work school I was no longer surrounded by a bunch of evangelical Christians Now I was meeting gay and lesbian and transgender people Now I was meeting people of color Now I was meeting all these different people from all these different walks of life and learning about what real problems It forever changed the way I felt about being in the church It forever changed what I felt about my own identity and what actually helped me people is I didn't really know that much about discrimination and all of the things that other people marginalized people experience I didn't realize how many people were marginalized Once I began to learn those things and experience that through my professors through my fellow students I started realizing that I was part of a club that was very judgmental very elitist And basically you need to think what we think or you're wrong And there are very serious consequences to being wrong We are not on the right side with God Like the the the hits just keep on coming And I just didn't feel good about that anymore So when I realized I don't I shouldn't be in this marriage anymore I shouldn't be in this church anymore And my life was half over I left both the church and the marriage And I got so much hate from literally everyone I knew that I had to move to another community Wow Because you know that's the thing it's like when you're in you're in But when you question when you step aside and I don't know if every church is like this but It was literally like you are going to the dark side I'm like so for 10 years I wouldn't have anything to do with any kind of spirituality I didn't want any part of it but eventually my chronic pain led me to discover Buddhist philosophy And for the last 15 years I don't consider it my religion I can say My philosophy of living and it makes so much more sense to me But again it's like being the trauma survivor Who's out of step with other people socially once you're not a Christian anymore your world shrinks really fast

Casey: Yeah Really fast So interesting Interesting I so appreciate you walking through that whole thing because another thing I talk about a lot is the Kind of the unplanned for changes in life where like like you said you you kind of outgrew religion All of a sudden you're looking around you're like this just doesn't fit anymore And I think it takes a huge amount of self-trust and self-awareness too Dump everything on the ground and try again and like to be able to see that articulate it make the decision to follow through on it is a part of resilience that I don't think we we talk about resilience around trauma a lot and we talk about resilience around like big life changes like the kids moving out of the house But like what about when life just doesn't fit anymore And I don't hear enough conversations about what do you do when it just doesn't fit So I so appreciate that you're able to articulate that and that you had to literally throw it all away and start all over

Diann Wingert: This is such an important point and I'm really grateful that you recognize that acknowledged it and and want to talk about it I totally agree I think the conversation culturally

around resilience is you fall down How quick do you get back up and then what it's like bad things happen and what's your bounce back ability factor and how do we increase that But for those of us who are compelled to a path of continuous personal evolution that's my term for it I really it's taken me many years to recognize This is who I am This is who I've always been I haven't maintained the same friends for many many years I continue to evolve in that respect I've been in three marriages There wasn't a huge trauma Nobody did anything terrible I literally outgrew that container I was growing much faster than the person I was with And at some point we just did not fit anymore Did not feel right for either of us Maybe that's not the way they perceived it but looking back very very clearly for me I've had four careers Not not jobs complete successful career paths but when the container I'm in is no longer satisfying there's no further room for growth I have to go And that's always cutting pain and shame and guilt because it involves so much loss And it's intentional Like I have never felt like I deserved any compassion for the losses for the disruption for the period of instability following big sweeping changes I've made in my life because to quote somebody gave me feedback about one of my reinventions bitch You chose it So it's like and now I jokingly say to myself when I'm feeling sad or sorry or lonely or whatever I'm like bitch you chose this But the reality is I keep choosing it Yeah because once you let go of the guilt once you let go of the shame once you let go of the apology once you stop looking around for somebody anybody can I get some approval Can I get some permission Oh no Well I better ask a few more people No you don't need to ask anybody This is who you are And when I hold myself back I struggle I have symptoms meaning distractable depressed irritable That's my mental health struggle when I hold myself back and I don't allow myself to grow That's when I experienced mental health symptoms And I think this is just I guess I'm just a real outlier because I never heard anybody talking about this

Casey: I don't either And you know you were saying like bitch you chose this but like can we also normalize supporting people making these choices Like yeah like you lost you know the marriage the church the community that goes with the church literally having to up and move Like

Diann Wingert: everybody I knew all my friends my social support everything Like I

Casey: just want to go back and find like past you and give you a big hug and be like You still get to be sad even if you chose this you still get to grieve Even if you chose this doesn't mean you're not going to be happy in the long run but like yeah there's just such a big conversation This is a whole nother episode I could do on just this Like just because we chose it doesn't mean it wasn't hard or that it doesn't they'll still deserve compassion We need to normalize like oh my marriage just didn't fit anymore Like somebody who's getting divorced Oh did he hit you Did he cheat on you No we just didn't We just didn't fit anymore

Diann Wingert: Like yeah it's true And I I ha I had to change my own language around it because I realized I had internalized so much shame about my need for continuous personal evolution that I referred to Having a broken marriage or a failed marriage I remember a few years ago not too many years ago actually I made an offhand comment I was talking I've three kids two sons

and a daughter kids hardly kids they're in their thirties but I was making it I was having a conversation with my oldest son and I we were trying to figure out the timing of a particular situation Neither one of us could remember exactly when it was And I said I don't remember exactly when but I think it was around the time I broke up the family and I didn't even realize that I said it it was one of those off-hand comments and he's like mom wait you didn't break up the family you just rearranged it And I realized that's right Nobody's broken We're all still here We all still have relationships with each other They're all continuing to grow and evolve And I've created a culture within my own family with each of my kids that when it's time to grow you might need to go And that's okay Because the last thing I ever want is to be the reason that someone else is held back from their own evolution And that includes my husband Sometimes he likes to refer to himself as my current husband and together 25 years I think he's a keeper but yeah but you know I when we took our wedding vows we did not vow to stay together forever We even said in our vows and when the time comes for us to part that may be by death when the time comes for us to part we will do so with love honor and respect For all that we have shared That's how I think now I don't apologize for anything anymore and I don't need anyone to give me permission to be who I've always been But man did that take a long time to get there

Casey: Yes I hope I hope The perfect sentiment to wrap up on tonight I today I hope we can I hope that through this podcast and I know you and I will have continue to have conversations we can help more people see that in themselves and not have to wait until they're in their forties and fifties to recognize that so thank you This has been amazing This is the perfect episode to for this brand new podcast for me anything you want any last words and or where can we find you online for those that want to follow

Diann Wingert: If you like the sound of my voice it's mainly because I have this fantastic new mic It's a shirt MV seven but now seriously if you'd like to send them my voice you should definitely check out my podcast which is the driven woman podcast with Diann Wingert And I'd love it If you'd follow me on Instagram at coach Diann Wingert it's got a funny spelling so I'm sure she will link to it in the show notes And I just want to say I so appreciate you For your own evolution for giving yourself permission to grow into this new identity this new adventure and this new way to reach and teach people I love it Hmm

Casey: Thank you so much Diann And yes absolutely All of that will be like linked up in the show notes Thank you so much to be continued