



MYRIAM LOESCHEN

Transcript: Wounded, Worthy, and Dedicated to Joy

Sarah Greenman:

Hello, and welcome to Collaborative Alchemy. My name is Sarah Greenman, and I'm a creative Alchemist, artist, storyteller, writer, and facilitator. I believe that your creativity is a gift meant to be wielded with great love, and joy. It is a bone-deep tool for justice, healing, and revelatory collective liberation. Collaborative Alchemy is a series of conversations with artists, thought leaders, activists, farmers, educators, creatives, and other polymaths, where we tell our stories, expand our history and hold space for new ways of being.

Myriam Loesch:

And so I was walking through life with this question, this beautiful, beautiful question in my heart. Can I be both wounded and worthy?

Sarah Greenman:

My guest today is Myriam Loesch, a coach and facilitator. I've had the extreme pleasure of working side-by-side over the past year as a co-facilitator with Myriam. She is a community conduit, cultural Alchemist, and joy architect. She holds certifications from the Satir Global Network, the Institute of Integrative Nutrition and the Catalyst Leadership Program. She guides groups, and individuals in resilient conversations around a myriad of issues, including race, identity, healing, and self-awareness. Myriam is also the recent recipient of the Anti-racist Initiative Grant from the Virginia Satir Global Network. Myriam is also a lifelong lover of poetry, and she nourishes her Haitian roots, and healing legacy through food.

So for those of my listeners who don't know, you just tell us a little bit about yourself.

Myriam Loesch:

I am in process. I think that's what my epitaph will say. Here lies a woman who was in process, in progress in process. Yeah, just in a very, very observational learning phase. And I'm starting to recognize that it's not actually a phase. This is who I am, which is gathering information, processing, making a lot

of mistakes, doing a lot of repair, having insights and sitting in discomfort, but also being very appreciative and dedicated to joy.

Sarah Greenman:

Dedicated to joy. Boy howdy. You bring up, I love this: the idea that it's not a phase. That this is now what I'm like. Say more about that. Because we love the idea that things are just *for a little while*.

Myriam Loesch:

Right, right. And I believe, well, what I'm learning, what my experience is, it's a message that, oh, you keep banging your head against the wall or the universe keeps giving you the same lesson until you get it. And I'm starting to think that that might be bullshit. I think the universe just gives you lessons, and you don't necessarily ever get it 100%. I think you have a deeper capacity for understanding. You also have quicker response time, quicker turnaround time, in terms of healing and fixing it. It's like you're unconsciously unconscious. Then you come into consciously unconscious. Then you come into consciously conscious, but there's never a time when we just get it right 100% ever.

Sarah Greenman:

There's deep imperfection that is the river we're all wading in. Yes.

Myriam Loesch:

Yeah. I was thinking about this, this morning actually, because I was reviewing my eight-year-old son's math homework. And he did it last night. He's in multiplications right now, and I was reviewing his work and I checked it. He did it himself. Yes, and complete, it's done last night. And I was checking it, right as one does. I got frustrated because I realized there were a couple that were incorrect, which means that his work was not perfect. Which then I said to him, "You really got to check your work because you really want to get this perfect." So I'm already setting him up for that, right? It's got to be perfect. Can't turn this in unless it's perfect.

Myriam Loesch:

When I start to think about it and I thought, well, that's interesting. He did it. What I want is for him to get 100%, what is that about, right? Is it a reflection of him? Is it a reflection of me? That's a whole nother conversation. However, this idea that it's got to be perfect it's not done right. And it takes away from the learning, right? If we're just striving for perfection all the time, and there's no room for error, and there's no learning. Yeah, this has been a theme for today.

Sarah Greenman:

The person who can't make mistakes, can't learn.

Myriam Loesch:

Exactly.

Sarah Greenman:

Well, this comes to so much of your work as a facilitator, as you work on accountability practice. What does that look like for you in your own life?

Myriam Loesch:

Oh, I think it looks, if I'm honest, it's a little harsh. It feels a little judgmental. It feels conditional. I don't think that I gave myself a lot of freedom and compassion in that space, and I'm definitely working on that. I think that I have a belief and have for a long time, but I'm now conscious of that, that I need to do it really well. I need to do it *right*. And so when I think about accountability, it has to look a certain way. I have to present a certain way. People will have to understand it a certain way and it really doesn't give any space for uniqueness, right? And it doesn't allow for or support my notion of learning because what that looks like is more rooted in the curiosity and wonder as opposed to perfection. So as far as being accountable, I'm really, really committed to the idea of being clear about my intention, which is about the listening. And just letting there be a lot of different parts that add to, and that combine to coming to a particular conclusion about something, or an idea about something.

Sarah Greenman:

You've made me think of Mia Mingus, the activist, who does a lot of disability justice work in the Bay Area. And she, in her article "Dreaming Accountability", she talks about what if accountability was a sacred state, like the sacred social opportunity that we treated people who were in an accountability process or a repair process as in a sacred state? And I loved that idea that we *want* that. And that if you weren't in accountability process, you probably weren't really practicing your humanness.

Myriam Loesch:

Exactly. I think it is interesting, right? That there's these sort of virtues that go along with how we define ourselves, and then they're not always in alignment with the truth of who we are. I just think the world is just way too complex for that. And I just think it's really setting us up for, if you are one, as I am, who doesn't have that balance between imperfection and okayness. You can get yourself in just some trouble there, right? You're just not allowing for any space and for mistakes.

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah. When I think about your work as a facilitator, as a painter, as a creative, you center, as you said, you're dedicated to joy, right? There's like this joy, and juice, and love at the center of everything that you do. And I always wonder how someone becomes a person who absolutely centers joy and love at the center of their work. What event or events has really most shaped the trajectory of your life in that direction?

Myriam Loesch:

I believe that it has been, I guess it's really a reflection of how I've even ended up here, right? I am definitely a person who has walked on the line of suicidal ideation, right? Like, "Oh my God, this is too much, I am out," right? And then, when I look at my life and the grace that surrounds me and the grace that carries me, I consider I have this vision of myself being carried by love and joy, I'm in a mosh pit, right? And my body's just floating above, and all of these parts of my life are holding me up, and literally

pushing me forward towards whether it's the stage or the bathroom, wherever it is I'm trying to go in the mosh pit.

Myriam Loeschen:

But realizing that I'm still here. And I have so much that surrounds me, that reflects back to me, that love is true, love is real. Beauty is true, grace leads, life is equal parts, joy and suffering. And I'm not sure exactly. I think at some point in my life, probably through years of therapy, and work, and reading, actually, I remember now that I was actually in the office of a therapist one day, who said to me, "For someone who self-deprecates so much and questions her own actions constantly, it's interesting how you've surrounded yourself with really solid loving people, right? So my partner and life, my friends, I've made choices that have made my life fruitful. And so she said someone in there, there's a self, right? There's spirit, there's self, whatever people choose to call it, that has a knowing has a really deep knowing what is, what feeds you, right? And what is good for you.

And so I'm lucky to say, I'm not finding myself in a more challenging life, right? Where things are hard, but there's certainly things that I can navigate. And then I can definitely handle. And most of the challenge or the difficulty of my life comes from my own brain, my own mindset, right? Of course, life is hard when we look outside of ourselves and think about everything that's happening in the world. Absolutely, and that I think has, and does bring people down, has brought me to my knees. More times than I'd like to remember.

I just know that I can look at you, I can look at my baby boy. I can look at my garden. I can look at my art studio and I can say, "Oh, okay. I got that thing figured out somewhere someone was guiding me." There was a beacon and there was a lighthouse, right? That was guiding me to get past. And now the work that I'm coming to, or I'm coming into a season in my life where I'm realizing, it's okay to really accept all that and really know that, I don't know if it's about worth or anything, but to really know that it's truth.

Sarah Greenman:

Truth.

Myriam Loeschen:

Right?

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah. I think it's so interesting that you make the differentiation between worth and truth. We're in a culture now where we're talking about self worth all the time and the worthiness, which I believe is absolutely has to be part of the conversation, that radical self love, right? That Sonya Taylor talks about. And that absolute acceptance of what is, but naming it as truth as well, I think gives it like extra gravitas or something.

Myriam Loeschen:

Right. Well, I think that if you it's goes back to that saying, and I don't know if your caregiver said this to you as a young child, but it's like, "Show me who your friends are, and I'll show you who you are," right? So it's sort of like, show me what your life is, and I'll show you who you are, to some degree, right? And so when I think about my life, and I think I am rooted in joy and I'm rooted in love, and I really am

centered in that. I'm like, "Oh yeah, I got that thing down." That's true. That's really true. Whether or not I feel worthy, that's a different conversation, right?

Myriam Loesch:

Yeah. I had this beautiful experience years and years ago. I am a patient person. And I probably the last time I went to Haiti that I remembered with my family, I was 15. So just before the earthquake, I had done a vision for the year. And one of the things that I said, my parents divorced early, and we lost a lot of family members and that sort of separation, people picked sides and whatnot. Anyway, so I really lost contact with a lot of family members, and all of my father's family members that were in Haiti. And so I had made this goal of reconnecting with my family in Haiti. So the universe was like, "Oh great, I'll give you what have an earthquake because I kept sort of trying to find different ways to get there whatnot." And when that pretty happened, I thought, this is okay if this is the sign, if I'm looking for a sign, this is it.

So I went and I spent about a month there and I traveled and saw family. And there were a few things that I really learned on that trip. One was, I flew into Port-au-Prince, where was the epicenter of the earthquake. And my aunt picked me up, said, "I'm going to take you through the city for a week, then we're going to go see Haiti," right? So that this is not the memory that you're going to take home with you and share with your friends. This is one aspect. So that's one, right? It is the beauty in the cracks. The second is, we drove out to this where my paternal grandmother had lived. And we went to go visit a gentleman who was, has since passed away, but is my father's godfather, and a family friend and neighbor and whatnot. So we went to go visit with him and he welcomed me with such loving, open arms, right?

And he said, he brought hand, "This little tiny one room space," that he lived in, he was 84. And we sat in very frail. We sat and we talked and he was so astounded because he hadn't seen my dad in 30 years. And I looked a lot like my dad, I have two other siblings, but I look most like my dad. So from the way that he looked at me, I could see all he could see was my heart, because all he could see was my father, right? So all he could see was my heart. So it didn't matter like where I came from, and he got up, barely could walk and went into this little room that he lived in. And he said he had something special that he wanted to share with me, and he came out with this bottle, this old plastic bottle.

And then there was this, like this liquid of whatever. I don't know what it was, but he brought out three shot glasses because I was with my aunt and he poured each of us a liquid and true American fashion, I did a shot of it, right? Which his hope had been that we would sip it, but I shot it. And it was pure fire water, pure fire water. To this day, I'm not even exactly sure of the ingredients. What I do know is that there wasn't very much left of it in the bottle. And two, he said, he only wanted to share when really important things happened in his life, right? And I was a really important thing. I just know that ultimately, that's one of the most profound on memories that I have of that trip and that experience. The welcoming, the being seen, the being heard, the being shared with, the generosity that I received, right? So everything is rooted in love.

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah. What an incredible story about this man.

Myriam Loesch:

But I think I also thought he who had so little, actually had so much, right? Is what I think I walked away from that experience with.

Sarah Greenman:

I love that your aunt too was very intentional about making sure you saw of course, Port-au-Prince and the beauty in the cracks, as you say, but then really wanted to get you back into the reality of Haiti.

Myriam Loeschen:

Right.

Sarah Greenman:

Minus the moment of crisis.

Myriam Loeschen:

Right, which really is a metaphor that I still have within me to this day, right? It's embedded in me now, which is this idea, like everything that's happening, what are we really present to? What am I really present to right now? And that's the same thing in the work, right? There may be crisis with a company or crisis with our organization. What's the reality of who are we together? And who are we really? What is our truth? How are we coming to this experience? So, that was really important, really important.

Sarah Greenman:

I know that one of your major creative outlets is food. And this is also tied to the legacy that you have with Haitian culture, and the culture of Haiti really informs some of your cooking too. But tell me about food is one of your creative outlets, and also that you connect it with your facilitation work. I love this part of how you move through the world. One of the many ways I love how you move through the world.

Myriam Loeschen:

Thank you. Thank you. I'm really exploring that, I have to say, I think there's a lot more depth to it than I have really given focus to, to be honest around that. I come from a family that has real tradition around not even really recipes, but just how we nurture, right? Same meals all the time for different celebrations. Food is all is usually the way in which we celebrate. I also, however, have had a lot of different, have witnessed many ways in how it really creates connection, and welcomes and allows us to really glean vulnerability. I use it as my lead in determining how people care for themselves, how people nurture themselves, how people nourish themselves, right? I've had an experience where I have witnessed somebody who has very, how should I say, far-reaching conversations around vulnerability, yet as their friend, I know that they don't know how to feed themselves.

Myriam Loeschen:

They may not eat, I know someone in particular who gets for lunch at 7-11, which nothing against 7-11, I'm really clear about what we're putting in. And food is medicine. And I also have eaten and been fed by loving hands that have taken great care and delight, and responsibility to feed and to nurture me, with either very little to offer, or very simple food to offer. And I just think it's the one thing in life that we all do. We all got to eat, we all eat, right? And so I really try and tie that in because it's such a default, right?

Everybody just knows why I'm hungry, so I just eat whatnot. But asking ourselves a question, things like what we're hungry for. I know there's just so much room for play, around either creating a meal together, understanding how it is you feed yourself, things like you make a meal for everybody. Are you the first one to take a plate? Are you the last one to take a plate in your life?

Myriam Loeschen:

Do you take care of your needs first or the last? Right? Those sorts of things. There's so many different questions. And there's just so much room really for exploration around exploring how we think about food, and how we nurture ourselves. It's really, really important.

Sarah Greenman:

Well, I think too, when I look at the expansiveness of your facilitation work, these questions about how do we feed ourselves? What is our relationship to the ways in which we nourish ourselves, or our organizations, or our constituents, or our community, food is such a beautiful and obvious metaphor that can be in real time.

Myriam Loeschen:

Right, and everybody understands. It's one of those con one of the sort of trigger words, right? Which like food, money, sex, right? Addiction, those sorts of things. However, there's a much simpler way to also think about it too, which is exploring what our needs are. And there's the scientific way my body actually needs this every single day in order to thrive. But then there's also the emotional piece, right? Why am I eating? Why am I eating like this? Why am I eating this fast? Do I need to be eating it all? There's so many different questions and so many different ways to explore. And it's universal. Years and years ago, I made a friend who remains dear to me to this day who was going through a real crisis at the time. And I flew to DC to be with her for a week. And I made her what she has coined a magic soup.

And it's a soup from Haiti that we make in celebration. So usually it's made on New Year's Day or Christmas Day. My mother made that soup every Sunday. And there were periods in our life where we had no money, we had no heat and we had magic soup. And so I have come to really revere that and recognize the importance of knowing that what goes into the soup is the love that I'm trying to convey. And I know for ancestors, both living and not, they haven't always had the ways, or the words or the courage to articulate, right? With words, feeling well, let me tell you something, give my mom a plantain, you feel so love. We've gotten to a different place in our relationship now where we can articulate those things, but I think that mostly, it came through food.

Sarah Greenman:

It's so interesting, during moments of crisis in our family lives, people show up with food. They know that that is like a direct way to impact your feeling of wellbeing, it's instant. I want to talk a little bit about this quote that you have on your website, by Parker Palmer, "The soul speaks its truth only under quiet, inviting, and trustworthy conditions." In what ways do you create quiet, and inviting, and trustworthy conditions? And I know you do, because I feel them every day.

Myriam Loeschen:

I was just about to say, "Maybe I should edit that quote. Although again, as a work in progress, and in process, I am really learning and starting to understand the value of silence as a teacher. And that has been becoming clearer for me in my work around ego, right? What I actually call the pain body or parts, work we'll call the critic, the manager, the judger as Dick Schwartz says. So what I feel really strongly about in my work is the capacity to listen really well. And listening, not just hearing and listening requires silence. It requires stillness. It requires total presence to allow for space where one can go inward, not me, but if I'm working one-on-one with a client to allow them to have that space, and I think it reinforces their own ability to use their own resources, right. And that's because they're silence.

And I also think that it connects to my idea and my belief, really my ethos around believing that each person has within them, what they need to heal, to grow, to thrive. And I'm not teaching anybody, anything. I'm more walking alongside them. And I was having this conversation with a family member today, actually, and she was talking about someone close to her who just recently lost their partner. And she said, I haven't reached out, or called, or gone to visit them because I don't know what to say. And I was reminded of this idea of just showing up, right? There's really nothing to say, and you're such a great teacher about that, which is just always reminding me or stating out loud. Like I don't actually know what to say, and I don't know what to do, however, I am here.

I think what guides my work when I allow for this silence. It's hard because a lot of times you think, "Oh, let just tell them this. Let me just tell them that. Just let me just send them this book, or let me send them this quote." But I think it helps in establishing my own boundaries, realizing I'm not responsible for everybody. It helps remind me that everyone does really, truly have what they need with inside them. And not necessarily showing up as your answer, more showing up as a mirror, right? Just holding it up to you so you can see, and that comes from silence and stillness, and it's being really present.

Sarah Greenman:

Oh, I think that's why you're so effective and generous in your offerings as a facilitator. Just that sort of like radical, accountable partnership to just support and bear witness for somebody's evolution. You basically write that on your website, that's what you're doing, but you actually do it. So many people are like, "This is what I do." And then you don't really get that in person, but I just feel so deeply, bone-deep, that kind of as you say, magic soup of your presence and of that work.

Myriam Loeschen:

Thank you. I really, really appreciate you sharing that with me. I take that. I receive that. Thank you.

Sarah Greenman:

Some of your work also entails virtual group gatherings for black women and people of color, focusing on personal enrichment and self-empowerment, and connection, just connectivity. Will you say a little bit more about those circles, and what brought you to a point of wanting to hold space in that way?

Myriam Loeschen:

Yes, it started several years ago when I started exploring this idea I had, which is for myself, which is, can I be both wounded and worthy? And so I was walking through life with this question, this beautiful, beautiful question in my heart, and on my head, in my brain, I should say. And I think I know that things

start to come to us, right? When we're seeking, and the answer started coming to me. I don't know that I've actually answered it out loud. So I will now, and the answer is yes, it's possible. It is very possible to be both wounded and worthy. What I started to find was that there are so that people, people are really exceptional. They're very complex, they're beautiful, they are trying, they are showing up. They are wounded. I was meeting all these amazing people are just starting to have this pool of wonderful people who are great teachers for me, just in the way that they live their lives.

Myriam Loesch:

And I thought, "Oh, they don't really know how wonderful they are, because our connection might be in the woundedness, right? Or they might be leading from that wounded place. And so my circles came to being, because I wanted a place where other people who I knew, who don't know necessarily who don't know each other can share their woundedness, however, walk with a great sense of worth because of that common sharing, right? And that common storytelling. My hope is you will then walk through the world knowing that your woundedness has in fact created such strength, and such depth, and such connection, and inspiration for other people.

Myriam Loesch:

And then you get to lift your walk with your head a lot higher, right? We all have wounding. Some have greater, some have deeper, but ultimately, this worth piece is really true for us all. So that's what my circles and retreats are about is like gathering people together. And I haven't actually, I've co-facilitated some retreats with other people, but I think that my role in that is always, "How can I just love on each person so much so that then they can take that and keep going?"

Sarah Greenman:

Now, this is so much in line with the work I offer through the Creative Alchemy Cycle. I always say we're at the point of a great turning. And it's one where we have to answer a call directly from Earth that we're being asked to love each other back into wholeness right now. That looks different for everybody. But I see the avenue that you are walking as such a clear, and beautiful way to do that, to love each other back into homes.

Myriam Loesch:

Well, someone said to me years ago when I was in a moment of despair about what to do, what was mine to do in the world. And she said, "Your only work is to care for yourself, like get your mental health right, your emotional health, your relational health, your family of origin. That's your only job." Imagine that if we just think about the amount of healing that comes when you heal yourself, right? Like Lauryn Hill says, what is that song, it's like, "You can't win if you ain't right within or something," right? And it's like going back to that. So if I'm healing here, it just expounds, right?

One, and I remember thinking to myself, "No, I got to help out my sister. I got to da da, da, I got this, I got that." And she was like, "No, just care for yourself." And another impetus for my work around circles and retreats is the idea of caring for the caretakers, right? So many of us that are out in the world that are doing this hard work, caring for other people, how are they getting? How are they restoring? And how are they rejuvenating and whatnot? So that's something else that drives my work in that arena.

Sarah Greenman:

That's so key. I was just talking my last podcast with an artist named Torie Wiggins. And she spoke directly to that about the kind of rest and renewal that's needed right now. We're all in a state of collective grief for many reasons. This point that you bring up too of just take care of yourself. It's interesting. I think sometimes we can misunderstand that is like don't care about others. Like we're such a binary culture that we don't understand both of them. And I was just listening to Resmaa Menakem, and he was talking about how white-bodied people need to resist the urge to teach. And I was like, gosh, that really affected me deeply because I am a white body person in a leadership position in my own work. And I do a lot of facilitation -- like you said, teaching by "walking alongside." And I thought about that as actually a beautiful way to better understand how white folk can and do this work, which is just to take care of our own whiteness and understanding of our whiteness, and sort of come to terms with our white bodiedness, and the privilege that that affords in this society, and that by modeling, just I'm going to work on myself. That that is a way of being in right relationship without stepping into this weird place of like teacher, which is reinforces white bodiedness desire to like be the guru or to like be where information comes from or to be where-

Myriam Loeschen:

Even goes back to colonization, right? Like my way is right. You can't be doing it that way. You got to, right?

Sarah Greenman:

Somewhere appreciate at your words on that. I'm connecting that up for myself.

Myriam Loeschen:

That's a really good point. Again, we're both in process, right? Always in process and always learning. And our temptation is to say, "Oh, I just learned this, or I just read this," even now this conversation in my mind, I'm like, "How much did I say that felt like?" But just allowing for the leading by following a little bit, right? But also on a grand-scale, imagining if everybody was doing their own work, if everybody was asking themselves a question, and a lot of times when I do individual one-on-one work around racism, people around race and equity, people will say, "Just tell me what to do and I'll do it. Just tell me what to do."

And somewhere along the process is, this way in which you have to count on yourself, right? You are with yourself in the learning. And that's why the caring, and the nurturing, and taking care of ourselves, and answering our hard questions. And why do I think like that? Where did that come from? Those kinds of questions and challenges that we give to ourselves, really help us uncover so much, as you say, people learn as they're modeled to, right?

Sarah Greenman:

Yeah, absolutely. As we close today, I want to ask you about what right now, this interview is happening during winter solstice season. We're hitting the dark days and the sunlight is circling the drain, and the light about ready to be like reborn again. And I wonder what right now is the source of light and joy in your life that feels just really generative?

Myriam Loeschen:

I'm going to say that I am a source of light, right? We talked about this a little bit ago when I was telling you that I've been learning about my skin, my melanin, right?

Sarah Greenman:

Yes.

Myriam Loeschen:

And how it appears dark because it absorbs the light. And that the idea of that has stayed in my head and my heart really, and holding in my heart because I've thought about, there's moments when I'm navigating really hard things. And I feel frustrated or disappointed with myself because I don't have the right answer or the right thing to do. I don't know the right action. And what feels generative to me is to remind myself that I am the light. I bring the light, that's who I am. So, that feels generative right now.

Sarah Greenman:

Myriam, thank you so much for your time, your energy, your expertise, your beauty. Thank you. Thank you.

Myriam Loeschen:

Thank you. I want to also thank you for how strongly you are committed to your offering to all of us, to the world.

Sarah Greenman:

Thank you so much for listening. Collaborative alchemy was made possible by micro donations from my community at www.patreon.com/SarahGreenman. You can also find more about my work www.sarahgreenman.com. And you can also find me on Instagram [@Sarah.Greenman.creative](https://www.instagram.com/Sarah.Greenman.creative).