

# Quarterlife

**Satya Doyle Byock:** [00:00:00] When we are at our most depressed our deepest grief, our greatest pain, there are ways through, and it's not just ways to get back to where we were, but. In the understanding of this work, it's actually to get us to the best life we've lived so far. And again, that's always what I'm hoping for with my clients is not just that they start to feel better, but that we are giggling and crying because we can't believe how much of their life they are now living and how beautiful it is to see.

**Debbie Sorensen:** That was Satya Doyle Byock on Psychologist Off the clock.

**Yael Schonbrun:** we are three clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships work and health.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in Mile High Denver, Colorado. Co-author of ACT Daily Journal, and an upcoming [00:01:00] book on act for burnout.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston based clinical psychologist, assistant professor at Brown University, and author of the book Work Parent Thrive.

**Jill Stoddard:** And from coastal New England, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard, author of Be Mighty, the big book of Act metaphors and the Upcoming Imposter. No more.

**Debbie Sorensen:** We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

**Jill Stoddard:** Thank you for listening to psychologists Off the clock.

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Hi everyone, It's Debbie and I'm here today with Jill. We are bringing you an episode with Satya Doyle Byock, who wrote a terrific book called Quarter Life, The Search for Self in Early Adulthood. This is a book really about some of the key features of that. Phase of adulthood where, you know, you're not a kid or a teenager anymore, but you're also trying to figure things out.

So typically, you know, in the twenties ish. Um, and Jill, I know that you had a few thoughts and questions after taking a listen,

**Jill Stoddard:** I did. Well, what I thought was really cool about this episode is that, Satya has a Jungian background, and that's kind of different for psychologists off the clock. I don't think we've really had anyone on with a Jungian background before, but one thing I thought of is any of our listeners who don't have a psychology or mental health background may have no idea what that means.

[00:03:00] And even for me, I do have that background and. I was even feeling a little rusty. So maybe I thought in this intro it might be helpful for you to kind of set a bit of a framework so our listeners will understand what you guys are talking about when you keep referring to Jungian psychology.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Okay. Yes. That is such a good point. Yeah. So Jungian therapists work is based on the work of Carl Jung, which was, you know, someone who came after Freud, but is still considered, I think, at more of a psychodynamic or psychoanalytic type of therapy. And Jung, I mean, he wrote all these really fascinating works, um, back in the day and.

I associate Jungian therapy, and of course I am not an expert on this. I did study it in grad school and I kind of, I think it's sort of fascinating. So I sometimes read work that I think is along the lines of Jungian psychology, but keep in mind, I'm not an expert, so I hope I don't botch it. But, um, a lot of youngian work [00:04:00] is about.

Dream work, dream analysis, um, myths and kind of this universal human experience of like heroes journeys and some of the inner conflicts that people typically face. And the part that I think is really interesting about Jungian therapy is, Is kind of embracing and understanding the shadow sides of yourself, like the parts of yourself that are a little bit darker that maybe sometimes we don't really want to be in touch with, or we certainly don't wanna share with other people.

And I think a lot of Jungian work is about. Sort of integrating all of these different parts of yourself. Um, and so I think it's super fascinating and what I loved talking with Satya is that even though our orientations are different, I loved learning from here her, and also you'll hear in the interview, There's some times when it's actually not that different.

Like we have more of a behavioral framework, but when it comes down to it, I think [00:05:00] there's a lot of similarity actually. We're just kind of speaking different languages and, and approaching the work in different ways, but it's not totally different. You know what I mean?

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. And I think that's often the case is that these theoretical orientations can look vastly different, but when you really dig in, you, you, you go, Oh, you know what, we're all speaking a very different language, but what kinda say in the same thing at the end, at the end of the day. So I, I really liked that, that you guys were integrating your different, different approaches.

Um, Okay. That, that's great. I think that's really helpful for people to have that basis before they get into the interview. Um, the other question I had that I thought since you had, uh, read book, that which was something that you didn't, is one of the big pieces you guys talk about is the difference between.

Um, stability, you know, seeking, seeking stability versus seeking meaning, and how sometimes these things are out of balance, that, that someone may have a little bit too much of one and too little of the [00:06:00] other. And that's kind of where the, um, like where conflict arises and where they end up coming into therapy.

And one thing I thought was, is there anything you learned from her either in chatting with her or in reading the book? That might give us an idea of how to help people before they get to quarter life. So Debbie, you and I both have an eight, eight year old and a 10 year old, and I found myself thinking, what can I be talking to my kids about now or modeling to my kids now so that they, so

that they're moving in the direction of a nice balance between stability and meaning to kind of circumvent a, a so-called quarter life crisis.

Does that make sense?

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. Yeah. And I mean, maybe it's not entirely bad to have a little bit of a crisis, in my opinion, to kind of go through a little bit of that soul searching, but, but if it really is a crisis, I mean, I, Okay, these are just my thoughts, so I can't say for sure that I'm right about this, but I'll, I'll just tell you what I think is that I think [00:07:00] as a parent, I think sometimes, We might think of our kids almost as an extension of ourselves, right? Like, Oh, I think it's really important to play the violin and speak French and go to an Ivy League school. And so therefore, I'm gonna almost like put pressure on my kid to do that. And it might even be a little bit of subtle pressure, you know, but maybe you have certain expectations or desires that you're trying to channel through your.

Certain things you want for them. And it's not always mal intentioned, like you want your kid to have a good life, you want your kid to be successful. But I do think sometimes people, sometimes people have a crisis because they've always done what their parents wanted

**Jill Stoddard:** That's a great point.

**Debbie Sorensen:** learned what they want for themselves.

And so my, I think one piece of it, advice I would have is to allow, you know, ask your kids what are they interested in to let them explore things that maybe. You're not so sure about, but your [00:08:00] kid is showing an interest in. And I think it allows them that freedom earlier. If they're having it for the first time ever at age 30, they're gonna be a little lost, you know, where had the chance to explore along the way.

They'll have a, a better sense of themselves.

**Jill Stoddard:** I love this, Debbie and I, what it's making me think is sort of in summary is like get curious about your kid instead of directive,

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yes.

**Jill Stoddard:** right? Like they're their own people, even at a young age.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yes. Instead of telling them what to do or putting pressure on them to do things in a certain way, let them have a little bit of exploration. Let them. Try things out a little bit. Experiment and, and then on the other side of that, you know, I think sometimes people really look for stability when they didn't have it growing up.

You know, so maybe they almost might latch on really strongly to stability and be afraid to take a leap if they didn't have a sense of like, I know my parents are gonna be here when I need them supporting me. You know, I'm not saying you have to be all [00:09:00] rigid about having. You know, this perfect routine or anything like that, but just having a sense of inner stability might make it so that, you know, at that age of 20, they're not desperately seeking.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Yeah. I love that. And I, and I think it's a great point that you make too, that like, you know, having a little bit of a crisis isn't, crisis is maybe the wrong word, but when things are not going well and that causes you to really dig deep and think about who and how you want. Your life to be, and whether you're calling it meaning and stability or values, as you guys talk about how you're, you speak this different language that say similar things.

You know, there's, there's a lot of, uh, well, I'll use the word value again, but there's a lot of value in kind of breaking and rebuilding, and if people listen to the end, you share and. Awesome metaphor. You know, I love metaphors and I'm not gonna spoil it during the intro, but listen to there metaphor about rebuilding that know.[00:10:00]

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, and that's a good point is that sometimes we use a word like crisis thinking it's gonna be this terrible thing and for some people it is, right? Like an existential crisis when whether you're having it at age 23 or 49, , it, sometimes it can be really difficult and painful, but it's also an opportunity to learn about yourself, to grow, to ask some really important questions of yourself and to me, I think that's one of the things I loved about this interview, and I hope you find the same, is that it really gave me some really good fodder to think about growth and to think about finding meaning in, you know, as you go through the, the span of your life.

**Jill Stoddard:** And almost at any age, whether it's quarter life or midlife, a lot of the things you guys talk about apply, I think, across the developmental span.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Absolutely. Well, we hope you enjoy the episode,

Satya Doyle Byock is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in Portland, Oregon, and the founding director of the The Salome Institute of [00:11:00] Jungian Studies, where she teaches and hosts other speakers online. She's the co-host of a Jungian podcast called the red book podcast.

And her book that we're here to talk about today is called Quarterlife: the search for self in early adulthood. It was just recently published by random house in July, 2022. Satya holds a master's in counseling with an emphasis on depth, psychology and a bachelor's in history, her clinical work teaching and writing draw influences from Jungian psychology, trauma research and social justice advocacy.

I'm so excited to have you on the podcast to talk about your book. Thank you so much for being here.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** I'm excited. Thank you for having me. I'm honor.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yes. Well, I'm really enjoying your book. It. Some really interesting ideas. It draws from all kinds of sources, including Jungian psychology, which I'm fascinated by, um, and case study examples and all kinds of really interesting ideas. I wanna just start us off with some of the basics here. So it's the title is [00:12:00] Quarterlife.

So let's start with what is quarter life? What is the age span of that and how do you know if you're in it? What, what are some of the main hallmarks of this stage of.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Well, the way that I define quarter life and I'm, I'm sort of augmenting a term that's been out there a lot. So this term quarter life crisis has been out there. It was coming. Into popularity when I was entering this stage of life, kind of out of college, or maybe when I was ending college. Um, and the, the idea with the quarter life crisis is that it's maybe an, uh, an early onset midlife crisis.

It's a lot of existential questions and there's a lot of tumult and, and terror and confusion. I have borrowed the term quarter life to say, Hey, we actually need a developmental stage. That is much more clear than the terms we have had to date young adulthood, you know, extended adolescence, these terms that I really try to use very sparingly if at all, because it's more [00:13:00] interesting to me to have a stage of life that isn't. Tied to accomplishment or tied to leaving one's parents' home. And also that we're able to then do cross-cultural study on this stage of life versus having a stage. That's kind of about the developing world,

quote unquote, for instance, Jeffrey Jensen, our net's work, which I really respect, you know, his work is emerging adulthood and he's got very specific theories around that.

But I found it very hard to work with that term, if we're really trying to explore this across time and across culture. So the way that I define quarter life is essentially the ages between 20 and 40. It's the first stage of adulthood. It's not adolescence anymore and it's not midlife. So what's in between, you know, that's what, that's what I call quarter.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, we were just talking offline about how it's a little bit under. Studied, I would say in the research world and I used to, I, my PhD was in developmental psychology back in the day, actually. And I [00:14:00] taught an adolescent development lecture course at one point. And we did a unit on, I think I did call it emerging adulthood actually.

Um, but it was interesting cuz there wasn't that much information out there. And I think I did like a, you know, a lecture or two on that whole stage of life. And I think that sort of reflects the field. What are your thoughts on.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Well, that's why I wrote the book. I mean, it was, it was really surprising to me, like almost disorienting that there was so little written about this time of life. Like I had to be wrong. You know, like certainly there must be more information out there. And the more that I was digging, the more I saw. Okay.

You know, when folks are doing statistics of mental health during this time of life, or, you know, statistics on who's living with their parents who has a college degree, there's all sorts of things that different people study, but the age ranges are always pretty flexible. You know, it's, it's maybe 16 to 24. Right. Like maybe [00:15:00] it's, maybe it's 13 to 20. I mean, whatever the age ranges are, they're really kind of all over the map and they rarely extend past 24, 25, 26. So meanwhile, you know, if you wonder, like, when are you an adult in America? Those ages are all over the map up until 27 is I think the latest now, which is a positive space where that's where being on your parents' health insurance. Right. So there's this kind of sense of dependency up until you're 27, but other than that, it's 18, all this. So these things are just spread all over and it felt like we need much better language to start, right. That's where introducing the word quarter life comes in and then we need a much more robust field to be researching and talking about this time of life.

And again, ideally not just in modern America, you know, cuz cuz a lot can be learned. And that's what I try to explore in my book a bit.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, absolutely. And I think cross-culturally, but even within the United States, there's so much variation. And I remember [00:16:00] when I was teaching that class and thinking. The markers of adulthood, because sometimes people look at it that way, adulthood, like there's some sort of milestones or something. And I, I read this list, like you're done with school, you have a job, you're married, you have kids.

And I was like 30 or something. And I had exactly zero of those, you know, literally I'm not kidding.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Yeah. So common.

I mean, this is, but this is the thing is I'm. I am trying to divorce acquisition culture from human development. Right. What if human development has a lot more to do with the development of self and relationships and curiosity, and, you know, self exploration and world exploration and less to do with the white picket fence, the diamond ring, you know, the college degree, the, the corner office, all these things, like there's been this very strange and, and unsettling merging of, of sort of the capitalist. Climbing with [00:17:00] development, such that I think most people coming of age in America really have a sense that they're climbing a ladder from kindergarten on almost. It's like you go through school in this, in this climb, you know, you're going from junior year to senior year and then you're out like, whatever these things are, then you're just standing on the top of the ladder and wondering, wait a second.

Right. So we really need to kind of be shifting it back to, to the development of the person and not the climbing through stages.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I love that. And we'll, I love that you look at it in that way, that it's less defined by those things that you attain and the, and achieve. And we're gonna get into some of the, in the conversation today, we're gonna get into some of the psychological things that are happening for a lot of people during that age.

I wanna start though, by asking you a bit. A personal question about this, because, so I'm middle aged now and reading your book, it brought back so many memories and just reflections on that phase of my life. , and I really [00:18:00] enjoyed hearing your personal story about your, you know, what you were going through that during that phase.

so, can you tell the listeners a little bit about that, about your own personal experience and how you came to be interested in this time of life?

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Sure, you know, Am increasingly conscious. Now, almost now that the book is done and I can kind of look at it holistically that I've always been really attuned to ageism. Um, you know, that when I was five, I didn't like being treated like a five year old, you know, the way that some people would speak to me or 10 or 15, whatever, I've always really bristled.

It sort of being looked down upon for age, you know? So I think I was always attuned to a kind of discrimination against younger people. and I know we often use ageism for older people. Right. But it really I've noticed this my whole life. Right. So when I was in. In college and heading out of college. And then in the, in the first few years out of [00:19:00] college, I felt in a very weird place in our society where I was sort of both expected to be achieving everything I should be achieving.

Right. Getting all those acquisitional things, finding the right partner. Everyone wants to know what are you doing next? Right. Um, but I also felt looked down upon and kind. Humiliated by feeling young and confused and not knowing certain things and needing to ask questions. And so it was an awkward place.

And part of what I explore in the book is, is really having, I mean, I speak about one kind of existential meltdown in the book in particular, in which I very viscerally recall being on the floor of this, the wooden floor of this rental home with, with a couple of roommates and feeling like I can't do this. And I was working at a tech job and trying to find meaning in the world. And I was just miserable. I was utterly miserable. It didn't feel like it made any sense or any impact on the world. Um, and that was really kind of the breaking [00:20:00] point. Right. But before that, there had been so many part-time jobs and weird bosses and confusing dynamics, just things I felt like I wasn't trained for.

And I also didn't wanna, it didn't feel. Right. So, so there's a lot more backstory to that, but I mean, my, you know, my, my early adulthood, as we tend to call it that early phase in particular was really filled with stress and exhaustion. Um, so I knew I needed to find some different way forward and the literature I was finding, wasn't really very helpful at the time.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Do you think I actually love it. People when people are in that existential place and they come for therapy and it seems like you were having a bit of an existential moment, right? Maybe existential crisis, if you wanna use the word crisis for it, but you were really asking big, hard questions.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Those for a long time were the only questions I really knew how to ask you know, I, I talk in the book about meaning types versus stability types, and this was a, you know, we can talk a little bit about that, but [00:21:00] just sort of teasingly. This was a very deeply meaning type moment for me, where I really struggled. To make sense of the world. And I got deeply stuck there. I just got stuck there, you know, but it is the most interesting stuff to me in therapy too, with clients now. Cause I think good. We're asking the interesting stuff let's get in there. You

know, let's explore. Why are we here on this planet? What are we all doing here?

**Debbie Sorensen:** You know, and sometimes people come in with those questions when they're, you know, 50. So in a way it's like, it's not a bad thing to ask those questions when you're a bit younger and you have more room to make a change and you made a change, cuz you went into, you went back to school and you fell in love with Jungian psychology and became a therapist.

And now work a lot with this age group.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** That's. That's right. So what I soon discovered, you know, I read, I ended up reading Thomas Moore's care of the soul, which is a, Yian inspired, deeply Yian inspired book, which was a best seller probably when I was born or something. I mean, it was back in the [00:22:00] day. I don't know if it was that long ago, but, um, and then I read Young's memoir memories, dreams reflections, and I started, I joined a dream group.

I found a Jungian analyst, but I had found a. That was intellectually, emotionally soulfully. Very comforting to me. I suddenly was, was up against ideas that I'd sort of vaguely wondered about. And, and I felt like, oh, I can do this stuff. This is interesting. This is not. You know, tech and an old boys, boys club, that's driving me crazy. So I started pursuing this and that's right. I went back to graduate. I went to graduate school and I got my degree in counseling psychology. And I knew immediately that what I wanted to be doing was really working with this time of life and trying to find answers what is going on. And. And why is it that so many people in quarter life are having existential crises? And yet we still collectively sort of think that we're supposed to have those questions when we're 50. Right? In fact, we [00:23:00] know that so many people are asking these questions in their twenties. If not earlier, we need to create space for that.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I did. I mean, I just remember. Grappling with those kinds of questions a lot at that age, too. What, what do you love about working with clients in this age group?

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Gosh. I mean, to me, it's so special because you really are co-creating life, you know? I mean it's, and maybe that's too, too large of a term, but. You get to be alongside someone as they are deeply exploring who they are. And then really putting that into practice. It's. There's a huge crisis later in life.

And they're, they're picking up the pieces or doing grief work. I mean, there's grief work early on in life too, but, but there's something so profoundly generative about it. That it's exciting to me. It's fun. It's compelling. You know, even when we're doing trauma work, if we're dealing with deep depression, there's a sense of where we're [00:24:00] headed together.

And that feels really fun to, to, to work alongside a client in that.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, one of the highlights of your book, there's a lot of interesting. Us in there and I'm, I'm intrigued, I'm more behavioral in my approach, but I still I'm intrigued by the Jungian stuff. I like to dabble a little bit. I think it's fascinating. I think there's some overlap, actually speaking different languages, but I think that there's, there's some overlap, but I love reading your case studies and they're fictionalized of course, but like, it's so interesting to hear about the process of how you work with some examples of, of clients through, you know, doing exactly what you're talking about.

Generating a life creating a life, creating meaning and purpose.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Yeah, I'm, I'm, I'm glad to hear that. You know, I definitely wanted to, to bring people into the clinical space as much as possible and, and to do my best, to really show how I work with people and which is tricky. Right. I had to write myself as a character and that took a little bit of time, but, um, but. But it feels good to invite people into that clinical space and [00:25:00] see how can we do kind of soulful psychotherapy so that it's not just about getting people back on track and back to whatever normalcy is. It's also allowing really deep pivots, even in our twenties and thirties.

**Debbie Sorensen:** So, what would you say? I mean, because this stage can feel confusing or overwhelming for some people and there's, there is no one clear path, like. You're actually maybe trying to get people off that sense of you do this, and then you do this and you do this. So what would you say maybe if

someone was listening to this or reading your book who's in that stage of life, what would be your ultimate hope for someone.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Well, I mean, there's no, there's no way to say this without sounding really. Woo woo. Right. But, but what I want for folks is to live their truest lives. you know, um, I know for myself what it, what it felt like. To feel as though my insides and my outside life were completely misaligned, you know, that they [00:26:00] were totally mismatched.

And I know what it is to feel like they're com incomplete alignment, or as much as possible on any given day it's it's. It's all invisible, it's all invisible stuff, but it's a completely different experience of life. So I want my clients to feel whole in the world. I want them to feel like they're inner lives and their outer worlds are as close to alignment as possible. And you know, and that takes a lot of hard work as we come of age and leave childhood and, and create our own lives. And, and so that's where the work.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah, this is where I feel like we're similar idea. Slightly different language is around exploring your values and clarifying your values and then moving towards your values. And it, it has that same sense of when the two are integrated. You know, when your behaviors are in line with what deeply resonates with you, and that can be difficult to whatever age you are, that can be difficult to really clarify, but [00:27:00] that's not the starting place that a lot of people come in to their first session

from. Yeah,

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Yeah. People, people tend to want the hurt to go away. Right. And, and it can be hard to explain that that may not happen in six sessions because what we're really trying to do is uncover the whole being or the whole value set. It's not just checking a few boxes and making it go.

**Debbie Sorensen:** right? Yeah. Yeah. That's not, that's not quite fulfilling enough.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** It doesn't. Yeah, it doesn't last, it doesn't get, you know, I, we talk about it in terms of sort of medicine, right? It doesn't get below the surface. It doesn't, it's like, like any topical solution. We're not, we're not dealing with the cause.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Right. Right. So I love the idea in your book of these two types, right? Meaning types and stability types, and maybe people don't

perfectly 100% fit into one of the other. It's almost never. And it's almost like maybe there's [00:28:00] even like this sense of. Almost like a conflict or trying to integrate the two.

Um, but I think that this concept, I just, as I was reading it, I kept thinking of examples of myself, of my clients, of my, you know, all the people that I love in my life. Um, so I'm wondering if we could just talk through, cause I think most people would probably resonate more strongly with one or the other.

Um, so let's start with meaning types. Can you talk a little bit about, you know, what are some of the challenges that meaning types are facing. And what is it that they are seeking?

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Yeah. So, so I'll just back up a little bit and say that, that this is definitely on a continuum, right? And the, and that's important because I am all about breaking down the binaries in culture, right. And I'm not trying to create

a new one, but it, but really that we can find ourselves on this continuum in some way, between meaning types and stability types.

And that the goal for all of us, which I write about a lot in the book is to find a [00:29:00] life that feels both stable and meaningful. So that we feel both secure and safe in the world. And we feel like we have a sense of purpose that our values are clear and, and we know who we are. Right. Um, generally speaking, when we talk about quarter life or what you know, or young adulthood, early adulthood, we're really talking about stability values, right? So that's, that's asserting that the goal of adulthood is to get married, get a long term job. Climb the ranks in a company that there's really very little disruption, confusion or asking the big questions.

Right? So stability types tend to be the folks that we have historically seen as successful adults. And in a sense, meaning types are the other. And what I'm trying to do in the book and in my work is to say, there's not just winners and losers in adulthood. There's actually. Two different broad types of folks who are [00:30:00] approaching this in different ways, meaning types are, you know, simplistically.

We can say they're the artists, the philosophers, the spiritual seekers, the deep thinkers, uh, and they start off quarter life really seeking meaning. But ultimately in the work, and this is a lot of work that I do with meaning type clients need to find a way to embrace finding stability too, without feeling like

they're selling out or killing their souls. Right. Stability types are the opposite. They may not come to therapy for a little bit longer. They may wait until midlife to have big crises, or they may check all the boxes as as you know, stability goals and then feel very empty inside. Um, and so that's when they tend to come to therapy and the work for stability types then is how do they orient their lives externally also towards their inner values and their inner sense of.

**Debbie Sorensen:** So I wanna tell a story here and see, because I think it's related to [00:31:00] this idea and I just wanna hear your thoughts about it. Okay. So first of all, I'll say that I went through a long phase. I was definitely more toward the meaning type as a young person and. Even to this day sometimes feel like I don't quite have my act together as much as some people cuz I'm in my head a lot.

And you know, I'm just, I think some of those traditional adulthood tasks are not my strength in life. You know, I hold it together better than I did

**Satya Doyle Byock:** sure. But

I think that's, again, that's more of us than we realize. That's, you know, we just need to be talking about it more.

**Debbie Sorensen:** right, right. And if you,

**Satya Doyle Byock:** that. Yeah.

**Debbie Sorensen:** if you compare yourselves to people who got that part of themselves together earlier, you can. Yeah. But anyways,

**Satya Doyle Byock:** are better at putting on the masks? That's the other thing is stability types are very, very good at not letting people see that they're crumbling inside, meaning types tend to their organs are on their, their sleeves,

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah, that's me. Yes. I think you're right. Yeah. They, there can be almost a false sense of that. So, anyway, so when I was in this phase, I really had this aversion and [00:32:00] you write about this in your book, this aversion to like, I'd see people pushing strollers in the suburbs and all that stuff. And I'd just be like, oh my gosh, is that my future?

You know, I wanna travel and do all these things. So I felt that. And then over time, you know, Got married and had kids. Okay. So anyway, I was in the, I was shopping for clothes in the kids' section of target, like the little kids' section

with the baby clothes and the toddler clothes. So I was shopping for kids' clothes and.

I had my own kids. And I was, you know, in my early forties at this point, and I overheard this guy, there was this heterosexual couple and I overheard the guy say something like, oh, this section I gotta get outta here. It gives me nightmares or something. And I remember feeling like on the one hand a little bit like, Hey, that's, you know, it's a little insulting to me, a mom here, shopping in this section, but also feeling like.

Yeah, I get that. I felt that way at your age. And that's just a time in your life when you're gonna feel [00:33:00] that. I, I think I was probably looking at a meaning type person who was having that same reaction I did.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Well, I love that story and, you know, I think. Being part of what I notice in myself, as you tell it, I, I am now. um, you know, I'm, I'm, I am entering mid midlife or I am now a solid midlifer depending on the, uh, age breakdowns of things. Um, but I'm kind of like a dog mom, like I've got my, my dog, we take walks every morning.

I work from home with my partner. We love our life, but it is, it is, you know, quite small now after I traveled all over the world and did some really crazy things on my own and had this kind of huge quarter life. My midlife is very contained and simple and consistent, and I love it, but it would've killed me at 22 to live the way I'm living now.

It would've killed me. Right. So I think what's so critical is not just kind of witnessing that for myself is two different [00:34:00] stages of life, but that we really allow ourselves to follow. What's true at any given moment that you can both feel terrified about the prospect of being a woman who's pushing a baby stroller down the street. and be a very happy mother at another stage. If you trust yourself along the process, you know that your soul knew something, go travel first, go to graduate school, build a career. Like whatever these things were such that then there's not an allergy to, to being a mom later on. You know? And I think what's tricky is that if we have one or two storylines for adulthood, everyone is trying to jam themselves in to a life that's not right for. What I'm really trying to do with this work is to say let's each so individually follow our paths that we can find each of our individual ways. And in this whole construction, you know, instead of all trying to fit into the kind of white heteronormative middle class story, it's just, it's silly. It's so narrow.

[00:35:00] It's just utterly it's, you know, it's suffocating for so many.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Right. There are so many ways to have a fulfilling life. I think you're right. Things change over the course of time. Right. You know, I, the way I live now would not have been fulfilling to me when I was 24. , but I think that that conflict still exists within most of us that stability and meaning conflict, because even now it's like, you know, I get really bored sometimes and I'm just doing Drudge work all the time.

But then, you know, over the summer I probably traveled more than I actually got to the point where I was like sick of being gone all the time. And I wanted to just stay home unfold laundry for a couple of days. So it's so, I mean, I feel like that continues to this day.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** A absolutely. And that's absolutely part of my own story as well, but, um, Carl Jung, who I've studied a lot of course and teach and, and whose work is in the book, uh, said that it's the serpentine path it's following the serpentine path.

And I, I think about that, which is to say the sort of [00:36:00] snake-like journey a little bit to the right, a little bit to the left, a little bit to the right that a well lived life is not just boom. I'm done. This is it. It's a constant process of listening to ourselves, a little of this. Oh, a little back in this direction that if we know ourselves well enough and we're building a life that feels good for who we are in this world, we always are readjusting. But the part of the work is to know, oh, I know, I know this is now me being exhausted with traveling. And, you know, what would feel so good is to be back with my kids, folding laundry, watching that show. I like whatever. Right. But, you know, you'd get sick of that at some point, too. So finding our way, all the.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah, it's a process by the way, quick side note, I do love that you integrate in the Jungian and the, you know, Joseph Campbell, the hero's journey, and some examples from literature and how this isn't just a now thing, right? This goes, this is in the myths, this is in, you know, [00:37:00] Old literature. This is, and, and this idea of that process over the course of time, I love that it's there's wisdom in that.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Yeah, well that's what I was really trying to pull back forth is what. What is the wisdom from centuries ago or thousands of years ago, versus just the current studying of this moment with social media and helicopter parents and whatever the click bait article is, it it's never felt satisfying to me.

You know, there's a lot of wisdom in the past.

**Debbie Sorensen:** you give a few examples too, of siblings and couples where they're different about in terms of. And meaning, um, I'm just curious about that. Is there something about the combination of the two can people learn from each other?

What is it about that dynamic?

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Absolutely. I mean, I think the goal really is to learn from each other and, and part of. What I'm hoping and encouraging is the more we can see, and this is YY and stuff, right? Our shadows in the people that drive us [00:38:00] crazy, or that we're projecting onto folks. When it, you know, when, when they're making us roll our eyes, whatever, the more we can say, oh, what is my work here? And so when I see what's very common is a stability type and meaning type sibling pair, or often in quarter. Especially kind of, as younger people are figuring themselves out, people are often dating their opposite type and trying in a sense to learn from that person. You can almost think of it as like trying to get the vitamins that you don't have.

You know, you spend a lot of time with somebody who knows things, even on an unconscious level. You, you feel I need that stuff somehow, you know, you need that stuff. So I bring up for instance, kind of a simple example that most of us know is, is, prince William and prince Harry. And really seeing, I think pretty clearly prince William is the stability type brother and prince Harry is the meaning type brother.

Prince Harry seems to have been visibly [00:39:00] affected by the, um, by the death, the sudden death of their mother, you know, that he spun out, he had alcohol issues. He couldn't find a good partner. Good. In quotes. He couldn't find someone he wanted to be with. And he was sort of spinning out publicly prince William.

Meanwhile seems as though he's, he's, never missed a beat. You know, he found this beautiful woman to become queen and they've had three beautiful children, et cetera. So you can see the way they, they live their lives. But I think we can also sort of feel prince William probably could use a little of what prince Harry has and vice versa.

You know, you can almost see prince Harry watching his brother and that stability in marriage and feeling like I wish I had. You

know, so you can see siblings play off of each other and the languaging around stability and meaning helps to help me just to frame, what are we really looking for?

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. Yeah. I think it's gonna help me. In my clinical work, we were just talking about that. The application [00:40:00] of this, I think maybe if I was currently in quarter life, I would, it would've helped me make sense of my own experience. But I do think I've seen examples of both someone who comes in, who has just been absolutely following the rules, being dutiful all along the way, doing meeting everyone's expectations and then is saying now what, and I've also seen the other, the other type where someone's.

Overwhelmed and not sure, you know, a little bit of drift.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** That's right. And I think historically the, the, the direction that we have tended to give both clinically, I mean, this shows up psychologically, it all certainly shows up in culture is something to the effect of get it together. It's either pull yourself together, get it together. You know, you have time in midlife to have a crisis. I mean, whatever that is, it's really about pulling yourself together. And for both of those clients, you describe. It's not good direction, you know, because the one, the stability type client who's done it. Right. And is now falling apart, needs to fall apart and [00:41:00] ask some real deep questions of themselves and the meaning type client who can't get it together.

Isn't gonna be able to get it together. So how do you figure out, okay, what are the small steps we need to do together so that you can find structure and stability? That feels good for you. Right? The jumping into the standard story, isn't gonna work.

**Debbie Sorensen:** You know, you gave such a day to day example of that, of the, the fictional client. Checked the voicemail in session, right? Like the, the 30 voicemails that were avoided. And I have very much done that before. avoided something simple like that, but it's like, okay. You know, you

**Satya Doyle Byock:** this together.

**Debbie Sorensen:** take a small step toward that.

Yeah.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Yeah. So, and I included that example really on some level, because I wanna offer therapists who are working with people in this time of life. We, we can't stay in a psychoanalytic box. Um, if we wanna actually make progress because psychoanalysis on some level wasn't built for these folks, you know, there, [00:42:00] there has to be some tangible support to say, Yes.

We're gonna talk about childhood and mother and father and, and trauma, but also what is really weighing you down. It's those 33 voicemails that you feel like an idiot because you can't answer, you can't open. Let's just do that together right now. A huge weight is off that person's back and they're building capacity to do this themselves in the future.

**Debbie Sorensen:** That is a very behavioral intervention. Wouldn't you say?

**Satya Doyle Byock:** It turns out we can blend

**Debbie Sorensen:** Exactly. I know. I love it. It's like they, yes, they work together. I love it.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Absolutely totally.

**Debbie Sorensen:** So you write about four pillars of growth, where people are doing psychological work often at this age. And I wanna just kind of quickly, well, let me just list them. And I just have a few questions, cuz I think people will wanna read your book to really take a look at all four separate.

Listen, build and integrate. Right. So I think we talked a little bit about listening, like kind of getting clear on yourself and what you care about [00:43:00] and your own inner voice and your needs. Um, I wanna actually ask you about separation because I have, when I've worked with clients in that age, and when I think back to my own, you know, myself in my twenties, I really think about that complex dynamic, typically with a parent or parent figure of some kind, but of sort of, you know, individuating and separating a bit, but also still those relationships do tend to be really important source of support.

So I was just wondering if you could say a little bit about that process of separation and how you see that balance between having connection and support, and then also carving your own path.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Absolutely. It's, it's the, it's maybe the biggest work of this stage of life. And we have very little direction around it. And culture generally

to separate, could also be, you know, in a longer phrase to transform relationships with. Childhood [00:44:00] parents or, or friends even, right. We want to change relationships from one of hierarchy, kind of child to parent.

I mean, these are simplistic. It could be aunts and uncles, but cuz everyone has different developmental journeys, but we're transforming those early relationships from ones in which you were a child. And there was usually some power differential, two adult relationships. And so. I for as a, you know, an example of my own life did an enormous amount of work with, with, all of my parents, with my father, with my mother who are divorced and with my stepmother and in, in individual ways.

And you know, whether it was big conversations, one on one, maybe even family conversations, we were working for years. To wrestle and deal with the past and have healing conversations and setting new boundaries to say we're still gonna be in relationship. In my case, our relationships were healthy. You know, I could say [00:45:00] completely healthy or healthy enough such that we could do this work together.

There's other folks who really have to set boundaries with abusive narcissistic, you know, addict parents to say, I can't continue to be in relationship with you. Everyone's gonna make those choices differently. But even that is transforming the relationship. It's saying I'm not gonna be under your thumb anymore.

I'm not gonna be your punching bag anymore. I'm not gonna care for you every second of the day anymore. I have to live my own life. Right? So this is about all of the relational work, the boundary setting and communication that goes into changing these relationships so that the ch once child can be an.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. And I think sometimes. This can be a difficult task and it can actually be difficult for the parent figure.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Absolutely. I think always, I think every single time it is difficult. yeah. It's hard work.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** What, What,

comes up?

**Debbie Sorensen:** well, I just think of an example of someone I worked with years ago, who's parents were [00:46:00] very sort of critical and judgemental. And when she started to kind of say, No, you know, I'm gonna do my own thing and I'm not gonna listen to this and I'm gonna, um, stand up for myself when I feel criticized.

Um, but it just threw the family into a, you know, a tizzy and it, and ultimately it turned out. Okay. But I think there was a period of time where it was just the status quo was completely disrupted.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Well, I think there's, there's so much benefit in that, you know, part of what is happening with quarter life development is a, is a, an evolution of the entire family structure. You know, when you ask me, why do I enjoy working with this time of life? Another word for that answer is that people are evolving very rapidly and in their very rapid evolution, they are, they. Taking their families on journeys too. You know, their communities are evolving with them. Um, you know, we, [00:47:00] we know that young people and we talk about this much more culturally when we're not shaming and making fun of. Quarter lifers. We're also honoring quarter lifers for how they help us broaden our understanding of gender or broaden our, our broaden our understanding of race and identity.

You know, that that always young people are working on evolving and transforming culture. I think we should be doing a better job, really culturally of also honoring that they're doing that to our families too, even though it's hard at first to say, okay, maybe this is gonna take us somewhere. If I hand some of this power back to my quarter life kid to say, these are the boundaries I need, this is the communication I need. What can that do for the whole family?

**Debbie Sorensen:** Ultimately, and can come out much healthier for everybody.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Absolutely. I

mean, that is certainly the goal. If everyone engages and steps in the disruption can lead to much healthier relationships over time.

**Debbie Sorensen:** So let's talk a [00:48:00] little bit about building. Um, yeah, cuz I, I mean, to me that felt so inspiring again, thinking about values and sort of creating that life that, that people want. What does building look like in your work with people? What does that mean?

**Satya Doyle Byock:** It is the, it's the willpower, the effort, the, the determination, the discipline that we need to put into practice. If we want to create the lives we really want, but it's also personal, right? So it's not just building is not checking the boxes. It's not saying, well, I already did that. I did that because you know, the unwritten rules of society said. go to this school, get the best degree you could get the best job you can make the most money. Right? That's not building, that's just leading to burnout. you know

what building, what building is is, oh, this is the life I want. And if I, if I want to really see that happen [00:49:00] before I pass away on this earth before I don't have any time left, I gotta put this into practice. You know, so it's, it's creating structures and discipline that, that ultimately align with the, the values, as you say, and the inner listening of who we are and where we're going. It may, it may be, you know, setting boundaries as well, kind of changing relationships. And it can, it show up in a lot of ways. Um, but it's that effort, you know, to create.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. And sometimes it's a rebuilding. I was thinking of the case study that you give of a lawyer who actually had built a life that looked really good, but then recognize that it was not the life that she wanted.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** That's right. That's right. So with stability types, this is the character mirror in the book. Part of what we're doing is, is deconstructing, you know, the false life really that they built, that wasn't aligned with their sense of who they are. And it's reconstructing, it's rebuilding a life that feels really good with, you know, with the [00:50:00] external elements that feel good for who this person is. In this case, she had the financial ability to step away from her job for a period of time and take a break and shift out of burnout and start figuring out who am I really? And what life do I.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. Yeah. And that, that can definitely be an interesting process as well. Um, and then finally, let's talk about the, the, the growth pillar that kind of ties it all together, which is integration. Um, what is integration and, and how do you know it when you see it?

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Yeah, I, I think of integration almost more as. A moment to celebrate than as any kind of work that needs to happen. But it's an opportunity to say, wait a second, you know, with clients who are likely to miss the joy right in front of their face or clients who are likely to, uh, to be sort [00:51:00] of overly self deprecating or something to say, oh my gosh, something's happening. It's almost like the birthing after the long gestation, the long labor it's it's oh my gosh. Something's happening here. There's a new baby. You know, sometimes it really is a new baby as one of the clients has in the

book. Um, but it's. It's it's the generative feeling of something has come together here and new life has been born. So when this happens, I'm often tearing up with my clients in just pure joy. I can't believe they come into a session and they tell me they have this job offer for a completely different field that came seemingly from the God. Or they get into a graduate school that in a million years they wouldn't have thought was possible, or they meet somebody on the street who changes their life and whatever these things are, they can, they again, can be career based.

They can be relational. They might be seemingly very small to other people, but for the individuals, something [00:52:00] transformative has happened and because the client and I have been in deep work together, we. And I really work to celebrate that full body celebration with clients so that we can integrate those moments instead of just let them pass us by and miss wait a second.

Something, something really big is happening here.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah, it's an experiential feeling. It's you? Feeling that with your client. I, you know, Jungians you all like not to, not to, you know, stereotype, but you like metaphors. Right?

And I think of this metaphor from the post traumatic growth literature,

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Uh, huh?

**Debbie Sorensen:** I think it was Steven, Joseph, I think is the name of the person that came up with it, which is when you've been through a trauma or some sort of adversity or difficult life situation. I think the pandemic is a good example of this for most of us that it's like a vase that breaks and there's all these pieces shattered everywhere.

And sometimes people [00:53:00] try to pick up the pieces and put them right back together and glue them together to get what. There before, but there's gonna be, you know, it's never gonna be quite the same.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Right.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Versus building a new mosaic out of the pieces into something beautiful, maybe different, but that it looks, but that it is beautiful in its own way, even though it's different.

And I have that feeling from what you're talking about, it's like you go through this questioning this, maybe there's a change in your life. Maybe it's more of an internal change, but in the end it comes out it's, it's not the same, but it is beautiful.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** No, that's absolutely right. And, and in the Jungian world, we call it alchemy. You know, we, we, we speak about alchemy of transforming. Transforming earth into gold, you know, or transforming the shit of life into gold. If you will, so it certainly is more metaphorical. It's more, um, kind of woo woo. In a way we're talking about, about mystical arts, but their good images for really witnessing that. [00:54:00] Absolutely. When we are at our most depressed our deepest grief, our greatest pain, there are ways through, and it's not just ways to get back to where we were, but. In the understanding of this work, it's actually to get us to the best life we've lived so far. And again, that's always what I'm hoping for with my clients is not just that they start to feel better, but that we are giggling and crying because we can't believe how much of their life they are now living and how beautiful it is to see.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I love that. And again, I'm just struck by the overlap between the work you're doing and the work that I'm doing, even though it's a different lens. It's like when people have a fulfilling vital life, there's pain, there's tears. There's laughter along the way, but that's so much better than just a simple, I don't wanna feel this pain anymore way of living

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Absolutely. and and I certainly am such a believer in, you know, whatever religion we call it. We're all seeking the same thing. Ultimately, you know, whatever. [00:55:00] Theory base we're working from that works for us, right? I mean, Jungian psychology is why I became a therapist, but they're all getting to the same ends.

We, we want people to be thriving, right. And, and to be able to support somebody, to thrive in their life and to heal. And so it's beautiful. I love that.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, I'm so grateful for this conversation. It inspires me. I. Your book really terrific. Everyone you'll wanna check it out quarter life. Um, and I really appreciate you coming on the show. Where can people follow you? Are you online? How can people find, find out more about what you're up to?

**Satya Doyle Byock:** I am online. I try not to live online, but I'm certainly online. Um, I have an Instagram account, which is Satya Byock, @satyabyock. Um, hopefully in the show notes, you can spell my names cuz I know that's not

easily spelled. Um, same with my website, Satyabyock.com. And I teach at the Salome Institute, which is salomeinstitute.com.

But if you find one channel, you'll find them all. Um, [00:56:00] and yeah, the bookstore, the, the book is out at bookstores everywhere. So I'm excited to connect with people who have read the book and wanna learn more.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Well, excellent. We will link to all of the above on the show notes, as you mentioned, so people can find one, stop shopping to find everything you need. Um, and thank you again so much. I really enjoyed talking with you today.

**Satya Doyle Byock:** Truly such a pleasure. Thank you for having me on it was a wonderful conversation. Thank

you.

**Debbie Sorensen:** you.

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