

Episode 170: Dare to Dream with Marianne Williamson

“Nothing will work unless you do.” – Maya Angelou

Today, we’re sitting down with one of the great spiritual leaders of all time, Marianne Williamson, who is also running for President of the United States in 2024.

Marianne is the author of 15 books, four of which have been #1 New York Times bestsellers, and she has been the catalyst for some of today’s great change-makers to transform the world.

Throughout her career, Marianne has worked on poverty, anti-hunger and racial reconciliation issues. She is the founder of Project Angel Food, a non-profit organization that has delivered more than 16 million meals to ill and dying homebound patients since 1989.

In 2004, she co-founded The Peace Alliance to support the creation of a U.S. Department of Peace, and has hosted the Sister Giant Conferences that have educated and encouraged thousands of women throughout the country to engage in political activity.

Becoming President of the United States is about as lofty as a goal gets, but she’s spent her 30+ year career preparing for this moment. The pillars of her Presidential campaign are the restoration of America’s middle class, including universal healthcare, tuition free college and tech school, and a guaranteed living wage; the establishment of a Department of Peace and the Department of Children and Youth; the declaration of a Climate Emergency to mass mobilize for the development of a green energy grid; and ending America’s Drug War.

Marianne believes the transformation of American society requires that we address the root causes of the problems, rather than just their symptoms – a focus that every country in the world should get behind.

She’s running for the Democratic nomination. If elected, Marianne will be the first female, the first mother, and the first grandmother to be President of the United States.

In this episode:

- The biggest problems facing the world today – and how to solve them
- How to disrupt the educational system to properly empower the next generation
- The dirty world of politics and her plan to give it a complete overhaul; and
- What you can do to step into your power and transform the world.

Before we begin, the right bit of inspiration can completely change the trajectory of someone’s life, so if there’s a friend or loved one who needs to hear this episode or could use some help to Win the Day, share it with them right now.

Let’s WIN THE DAY with Marianne Williamson!

Who was the first person to believe in you and how did that change the trajectory of your life?

My mother. I felt unconditionally loved.

Was that a big driver for you giving back to so many other people who may not have had such a close connection to someone in the home like you did?

Well, I did grow up in a loving home but also my parents were very giving, they were very giving charitably. When I was a little girl, I remember people would knock on your door collecting for this charity or that. And my mother would always say, "My husband gave at the office but, wait here, I'll get you something."

Later when I would do that and I would start asking people, sometimes people would say my husband gave at the office and then shut the door. My mother was a very giving person, both of my parents were. So, I grew up in a home where charitable giving and participation in the world in a generous way, if possible, meant something.

And you once wrote that "Your playing small doesn't serve the world." What's the difference between those who get stuck playing small versus those who go on to become extraordinary achievers?

Well, I was speaking of that as a woman. It's amusing when people misappropriated that to Nelson Mandela because that quote in its full context is not a man in Africa talking, that's a woman, clearly.

But I think that women have had, even more than men, the challenge of, if you are too much, you won't be loved. I was on a program earlier and there was a quote that this gentleman gave me, he said, "If a man speaks outside the box and he comes with something else, he's called a prophet. If a woman does that, she's called a witch." Women owning all of who we are is a trigger to the patriarchy, as they say, and so there are many, many messages that women get from the culture: just don't be too much. We need to play big.

You're on a very challenging mission to become President of the United States. What do you feel are the most significant issues facing America and the world today?

Well, in the United States, we've stopped being a government of the people, by the people, for the people. We have allowed huge corporate profits to become the governing principle of our

society at the expense of the safety, health, and wellbeing of our people. That means we've allowed economic principles – and soulless economic principles at that – to supersede democracies, to supersede humanitarian values. It's a terrible swerving away from the core of what a democratic and a humanitarian society should be.

We have allowed huge corporate profits to become the governing principle of our society at the expense of the safety, health, and wellbeing of our people.

In terms of the world, Mahatma Gandhi said, "The problem with the world is that humanity is not in its right mind." If you go anywhere in the world that I've certainly, anywhere I've been, people are decent, people are good, people want, but we have social systems, economic systems, even religious systems, political systems of tremendous force and power backed by military, backed by huge amounts of money that run counter to the love in our hearts.

That struggle is often played out in history but I don't think it's ever been played out more dramatically than it's being played out right now. Well, it has been because there've been world wars but it's a time when humanity does seem to be deciding who we want to be. And in that decision of deciding who we want to be, we're really deciding whether we want to survive long term because the path of conflict is a path that is not survivable long term given the kinds of weapons that exist on the planet today.

Is your vision of unity – and bringing love, compassion, and kindness – across national and international borders, a bit of a pipedream given it runs contrary to the motivations of outlets who profit from stoking that division?

Well, it's not just the division because a lot of the division is artificially created, it's the fact that systems make life too hard for people. In the United States, too many people don't have adequate healthcare or, if they have adequate healthcare, it's because they're working at a job they hate but they're there for the adequate healthcare or they're rationing their insulin or they have to work more than one job or they're in poverty or they're near poverty or their children are hungry or they live paycheck to paycheck, they can't even find a place to live.

The division is the least of it, the suffering is what matters. And if you realize that it's the suffering, then you realize how artificial the division is. Whether people are on the left or on the right, they're being screwed by the same forces.

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So, people are beginning to understand it's not the left versus the right, it's the powerful versus the powerless and the powerful have access. The powerful have access to money, they have access to the economic power, to the political power.

The system is designed to keep everybody else in their place and it's also even worse than that predicated on a permanent underclass.

I've been living in America for 12 years so I've seen firsthand just how expensive some of these pharmaceutical drugs can be.

Given that you're running for one of these mainstream parties, do you need to cozy up to them in the interim so you can achieve your aim and make the change you want? And, if so, how do you do that when they benefit so significantly from the status quo?

Even if I tried to cozy up to them, they would have no interest in cozying up to me! I think my positions are well established.

No, I'm not doing this to become one of them. I am not a traditional politician and the path of the traditional politician often leads people to cozy up, that's not why I'm doing this and those people would have no interest in being cozy with me even if I did, given the positions that I have. I am a challenge to their way of operating.

And what about those traditional pillars of the Democratic Party? Given how much it's changed and evolved over the years, what do you believe are the fundamental pillars of the Democratic Party?

Well, I'm living as I think many people are with some real grief over that right now. I think both Democrats and Republicans are feeling like, "What happened to the party we grew up with?" The Democratic Party I grew up with was still living with the coattails of Franklin Roosevelt. The Democratic Party was the conduit for unabashed, unequivocal advocacy for the working people of the United States.

Starting with Bill Clinton, there was something called the Democratic Leadership Council and it was the idea that, instead of repudiating and rejecting the dominance of what Franklin Roosevelt called the economic royalists, we would try to have it both ways and that just sucked all the soul out of the Democratic Party because you can't have it both ways.

Both Democrats and Republicans are feeling like, "What happened to the party we grew up with?"

Because if you were truly standing up for the working people of the United States, you're standing up for healthcare, you're standing up for free college and tech school, you're standing up for subsidized childcare, you're standing up for unions, you're standing up for paid family leave, you're standing up for affordable housing, you're standing up for a living wage.

And what many people within the establishment Democratic Party today do is they want to stand up for those things to the point where they'll stop at any point where they might be challenging the underlying economic bottom line of the people who, after all, are their donors too. Insurance companies, which is why we don't have universal healthcare, pharmaceutical companies, which is why people can't afford their drugs and so forth.

So, when I think of the traditional pillars of the Democratic Party, there are a lot of people who are establishment Democrats who wouldn't agree with me today. I think Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt would be considered too left wing. And I think for someone like myself, the positions I'm standing on – which, in my view, is what Democrats should stand on – are considered moderate positions in every other advanced democracy.

Do you feel like being a political leader in the digital age is a bit of a poisoned chalice no matter what country you're in – that you're damned if you do, damned if you don't?

Twitter is such a cesspool, it's so damaging. The high side of social media is obvious for all to see but people's careers and lives get ruined for sport. To be personally at the effect of that is very painful but it's bigger than any one person's feelings, it's damaging to our democracy.

It means that people get thrown out of conversations that should be in those conversations. It means people are afraid to speak up, people are afraid to say things. It can't continue like this.

Does it concern you that a lot of people are getting blocked from having a voice or a seat at the table of the town square even if they might have done some things in the past that have proven to be wrong, ignorant, or misinformed?

There's that and then there's also how vulnerable people are. People who think of themselves as too sophisticated to be taken in by media manipulation, how very much manipulated they are by one internet article. Who wrote that article, where's the research on that article or one anonymous tweet.

On social media, people's careers and lives get ruined for sport. It means that people get thrown out of conversations that should be in those conversations

At the beginning of the Twitter age, everyone thought, "Oh, it's going to be so fabulous. Everybody's going to be so polite to each other," it's not that way. Even with independent media, we thought, "Well, we won't get all our news from mainstream corporatized media so, an independent media, it'll be so great," but a lot of independent media is just as poisonous in a different way. And it's only getting worse, it's only getting worse.

Now, with AI, anything could happen. We all know this.

I've got a 4-year-old and a 2-year-old, and it's weird thinking about what world these kids are going to be growing up in. All the stupid things that I did when I was a kid, there's no permanent record of those things, thankfully!

That's so true. I think about that, I feel so bad. When I was in my 20s, well, thank God there's no record, right!?

I was reading about one young woman and I can't remember, it was something about race, and she made a comment she shouldn't have made, her life was ruined. And that was a young woman, she made a stupid comment, maybe she was drunk, maybe she was stoned, young, and apologized a million times, it was almost like she needed to go into witness protection or something. Her family's business was brought down.

We've got to have forgiveness and mercy. And also, you make a tweet, so what? It's a freaking tweet. So, I don't think that there's anything we can do on the outside that's a substitute for an ethical revolution. That's really what has to ultimately happen is that more of us go, "What are we doing?"

And also, I think my politics are on the left side of the political spectrum but I've certainly learned from running for president that there's every bit of smug, self-righteous, angry stuff on the left as on the right. We all have to look inside our hearts and do some cleanup.

A friend once told me there's 10% of people on either side who are just too far gone, just not even willing to enter the conversation. It's difficult to have a reasonable discourse about how we can improve society when you have those tensions inflamed by those people on either side at the extreme level.

This thing with Israel and Palestine is such an example of that. I just hope it's a fever that passes this way that we have of "I'm right. You are wrong. Shut up."

One of the things that I learned first when I was at business school was the principle from “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” that you should seek first to understand and then be understood.

Basically, in any situation you're in, you either ask questions to understand their position and, if nothing else, you are much more informed to be able to guide them to a position that you have. And even being able to connect with them on an emotional level means that, if you're taking a bird's eye view of what is the outcome that you really want from this situation, that they may not like you and you may disagree but they will respect you and you can have an actual conversation about it.

There's so much going on right now.

Even at college campuses which should be such an incubator for free thought and everything that you've described and have become, in too many cases, incubators of everything we don't want.

How do you provide a reasonable balance between handouts for those who need it and will benefit for it over the long-term versus things like individual empowerment, personal responsibility, and educating more so they have better skills to be able to contribute more to society?

Well, you begin with children. You set people up to win as children, that's the most important thing. If you set people up to win in the first 10 years of life, you're not going to have to worry about so much of that. That's number one.

Number two, it's none of your business whether or not people abuse your generosity. This is not about their karma, it's about yours. Be generous anyway.

Third, if it has to do with social systems, even though some people, no matter what, are going to play the system, some people are going to take advantage, it's just going to happen but that doesn't mean, in the larger picture of things, it's not to the benefit of the society for the behavior of the society to be generous.

You mentioned kids there, the idea of shaking up the education system is well and truly overdue. How do we shake up the educational system for the long-term happiness and prosperity of the future of the world?

Well, I know in the United States, we're the only major country that bases so much of our educational funding on property taxes and that needs to stop. So, every school in America, every public school should be a palace of culture and learning and the arts. How a nation spends its money, it's much like with an individual, how you spend your money is a reflection of your values. We slash taxes for the very, very, very richest among us and not nearly enough money, resources, and focus given particularly to the youngest and to the least among us.

How you spend your money is a reflection of your values.

So, it's that old saying, you can't tell somebody to pull themselves up by the bootstraps when they don't have any boots. Our educational system should be the crown jewel of our society. In today's world, it's too often a dangerous place and dangerous, not only physically in terms of guns, but in terms of drugs and gratuitous sex and ... Well, any sex in school would be gratuitous. Things that none of us want our children to be raised around at school.

We are living in the United States in a time that's permanent crisis. These crises, you'd think, well, drugs is a crisis or economic hardship is a crisis or medical care is a crisis or education is a crisis but there used to be a sense in this country that the crisis was the exception and not the rule. Today, it's a permanent state of crisis and we have to ask ourselves, "Well, what's underneath this?"

We can't always be playing whack-a-mole. We have to look at what are the root causes, not just the symptoms. And if you look at the root causes, you see how many of those symptoms are caused, on some level, by the same thing and that is the fact that our economy is so unbelievably rigged and skewed at this point in the direction of a very, very few Americans.

Our educational system should be the crown jewel of our society.

You talk about education but we have children who are traumatized *before* preschool. We have elementary school students who are on suicide watch, we have children at school who are hungry. So, we have to talk about it, not just in terms of education, but in terms of the whole child and we have to talk about it in terms of the wellbeing of the child from the time that they were born and a child born into a family, for instance, that is poor in which there is no economic opportunity. When you have that level of poverty, when you have diminished economic opportunity, you are bound to see more societal dysfunction of other kinds.

So, we have a situation where you have to take care of these kids before they even get to kindergarten. We have, in public schools throughout America, what they call trauma rooms. Well, why, in the richest country in the world, is childhood such a trauma for so many people?

We have to give people hope back. None of this is going to change until people get hope back and they're not going to get hope back until this burden is off people's back of the extraordinary chronic economic anxiety that millions and millions of people live with.

Restoring the middle class is a very noble goal for any country in the world. Is there anything you want to add in terms of restoring the middle class that we haven't covered already?

You can't have a democracy if you don't have a middle class because the middle class speaks to the idea of the equality of opportunity and democracy is about the equality of all people.

It serves us to look at the past. In the 1970s in this country, the average American worker had decent benefits, could afford a house, car, and yearly vacation. A couple could afford for one parent to stay home and be with the kids, one salary could afford to support a family of four and that couple could afford to send their kids to college.

Now, that speaks to a greater prevalence of social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, people who have time and bandwidth for their spouses, for their children, for their neighbors, for their community. But what has happened with this enormous transfer of wealth is that too many people are put in struggle mode, people are grasping all the time. 62% of people live paycheck to paycheck, that means one getting sick, one missed payments for rent, one missed college loan payment, one missed medical debt payment, somebody could be thrown into their car to live there. People are living in a frazzled, anxious state.

Economic wellbeing determines a level of emotional and psychological, even spiritual wellbeing.

So, when we say middle class, it's not just about economic wellbeing. Economic wellbeing determines a level of emotional and psychological, even spiritual wellbeing. People have to be able to relax at some point. When you have no money, there's no wiggle room, people can't relax and then the worst of us comes out.

And by the way, going back to children, often it's the children who suffer most because the stress is taken out on the weakest member of the family.

I put it out there to the Win the Day family, "If I could ask Marianne Williamson one question, what would it be?" and this is the question they wanted me to ask you, which surprised me.

The question is: How do we bring peace to Ukraine and the Middle East?

Oh that little thing!

Yes, I know it's a complex topic!

America's got a track record of being involved in these endless wars. Of course, there are some conflicts that require special forces intervention and humanitarian intervention but what would you do to bring peace to Ukraine and the Middle East?

Well, those are two pretty different situations so let's start with the Middle East. There has to be a two state solution. I don't see any other way.

The Israeli government right now says it's not interested in a two state solution and there are people on the left who keep saying they want a one state solution. If ever there was a setup for a bloody civil war... And in a one state solution, who would govern this? We need to release whatever hostages are still there. We need to stop the war, we need to obviously rebuild Gaza and the architecture of a two-state solution.

Now, that's not going to be easy but it's going to take international involvement on a level that did not occur before. Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, UAE, as well as the United States, as well as Western powers.

We need a new class of leadership, we need a new kind of leadership, both Palestinian and Israeli. The part that I find so sad about all of this is that they are there, I've met them myself. There are people all over this world. The traditional Christians would say God is lifting people up.

Something is happening on this planet, a new kind of thinker, a new kind of visionary is arising in this world – and they're in the Middle East as well. Those are the people that need to have the levers of power and that's who we should be supporting. As an American president, it would be incredibly important to me that this be about an equal commitment to the justice and security and sovereignty of both peoples, both Israeli and Palestinian. A lot easier said than done, but the United States should be an active participant in bringing that to be and that has to begin with ending this war.

How do you feel about Ukraine and Russia?

What's happening here is, of course, we had hoped that the counter offensive on the part of Ukraine would be successful. It has not been successful in the ways that we would've hoped

and basically the two countries are in a stalemate now, it's just a war of attrition. Vladimir Putin is clearly just waiting to see if Donald Trump becomes president again because Trump's a man he can deal with. He knows that, if Trump becomes president, they'll make a deal that will make Vladimir happy. I've always felt that there had to be a negotiated settlement but you want it to be a negotiated settlement in which there is a Ukraine.

There are those who say that, if you just made a deal with Vladimir Putin right now, that, first of all, you could trust him. There's no guarantee. But there are those who say you could trust him, he would not continue to just squash Ukraine and that, basically, give him what he wants right now. There are others who say, "No, this is what he does. He takes Crimea, takes a beat, comes back, takes a beat and then would be back again."

It's a very hard call and, as president, I would not have a problem saying to the American people I haven't decided yet. There is a temptation on the part of many Americans today to have almost a knee jerk reaction about such things as Ukraine. And listen, we don't have clean hands there. We don't have clean hands in terms of our involvement in NATO, and also we didn't have clean hands in terms of what some have said, Boris Johnson going there enough, Naftali Bennett saying that there was room at the beginning, that Vladimir Putin was willing to make a deal with Zelenskyy at some point.

I think that this is what's so hard for people. When it comes to Israel and Palestine and when it comes to Ukraine, you're not talking about good versus bad here the way people try to make it, because *nobody* has got totally clean hands here. With Ukraine, as president, you would be privy to information that probably you and I are not privy to.

You once referenced the American economist who mentioned that one-seventh of the annual military defense budget of the US, being \$100 billion dollars, that would be one-seventh of the more than \$700 billion of the annual American defense budget could eradicate deep poverty within 10 years. Where should efforts and resources be prioritized? Should it be more on restoring America's middle class or on lifting the standards for underdeveloped countries?

It's ridiculous for us to think that those two are mutually exclusive. The richest countries in the world, when they meet in their big G8, they could just decide to cancel the debt. Within 10 years, those guys could say, "We're going to eradicate global poverty within 10 years."

We have a billion people on this planet who live on less than \$1 a day. Nobody should find that tolerable. And then there's another billion above that who still live, I think, on less than \$2 a day.

It's a big responsibility for the societies that have a lot of resources to be able to help others. When we look historically, these countries have just been exploited in so many ways – for example, look at what's happened in Africa.

A lot of people say, "Oh, America is the most generous." No, we're not. We give far less of our money away in humanitarian aid relative to the money given by other countries.

We give a lot in *military* aid and we sell arms to 60% of the world's autocrats. Not great.

Yeah, a lot of people get rich from these military contracts.

Beyond.

And not only is the money made by the proverbial military industrial complex, we're not even producing the equipment that would be the most relevant in a 21st century war. We are buying and selling products that are 20th century warfare.

So much of 21st century warfare would be, for instance, cyber and we are actually spending probably too little money on national cybersecurity and the threats that work there. Other countries are not that stupid, I'm sure China's not that stupid.

If you were grading the terms of the previous presidents that we've seen, if you were grading Donald Trump on his presidency and Joe Biden on his presidency, what grades would you give them?

I would give Trump an F and I would give Biden a C+ or B-.

Are there any essential parts of your daily routine that you make sure to get done no matter what so you're performing and operating at your best?

My mornings. Time of quiet, reflection, spirituality, prayer, meditation.

If you wake up in the morning, you take a bath or shower, you brush your teeth, you don't want to take yesterday's dirt on your body into the day. But if you don't take that period of time for personal reflection, prayer, whatever your process is, then, even if you've cleansed your body, you're carrying all that stress from yesterday. And not only are you carrying yesterday's stress, but you're carrying the stress of people all over the world so then people are so mystified why they're depressed by noon. Well, there really is no mystery there.

You have to ground yourself in the world that is possible in the morning because the world that is actually with us is very sad today, it's very challenging so you want to set your sights on the world that is beyond this, the world of the possible. If you don't, life is too exhausting and it becomes hopeless.

And you feel today like people are spiraling down to cynicism and anger and all those things that you were talking about. When we were talking about how mean-spirited people are on the internet, it's an expression of people just feeling they have no power except to bring somebody down on the internet.

What do you love most about yourself?

What I love most about myself is what I love in other people too: *I love.*

But I don't think what I love about myself is any different than what I love in other people. And on a personality level, I see why I try. I see why I try to get it right, I see why I try. That's not enough. The Course in Miracles says your good intentions are not enough, your willingness is everything. So, I'm not saying my good intentions are enough but I make efforts. Even with this campaign, I make efforts sometimes despite extraordinary resistance.

And something I love about you as well, Marianne, is you're not afraid to put your hand up for any individual shortcomings or momentary lapses. I imagine you would be in an incredibly stressful, very busy environment. Your background and experience doesn't make you immune from some of the shortcomings and emotions that we have as humans. So, you being able to be transparent about those, I think, is incredibly inspiring for other people.

I'm a human being.

But I think that's true of anybody running for president. This is just a stressful experience, I don't think there's anybody for whom it's not. Maybe Donald Trump because he's a different kind of character than most people. But I think for the normal candidate, I don't care what your politics are, it's difficult.

On your best day, what's an affirmation that you would write on a flashcard that you could show yourself on your worst day?

Be grateful.

Love it. Let's now move into the Win the Day rocket round, 10 questions for some quick answers. Number one, what quote inspires you the most?

Only what you are not giving can be lacking in any situation.

Number two, morning coffee or evening wine?

Oh, coffee. Evening wine is nice too but it's not a requirement like morning coffee.

For sure. Number three, what's one bit of advice you would give your 18-year-old self?

Oh, relax. And you look so much better than you think.

Number four, what book do you gift the most apart from your own?

There's a book called Letters to a Young Poet by Rilke. I also love Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, that's a beautiful gift. Those two.

Was there a particular lesson from the first one, Letters of a Poet, that really resonates with you?

He says, "Sometimes you don't have the answer, live the question." Sometimes you don't have immediate answers, live the question.

That's brilliant. Number five, was there a vulnerability you once hid within that became your superpower?

Yeah. Feeling less than, feeling rejected gave me compassion for those who are rejected by the society.

Number six, what's one thing you've learned about failure?

That you have a choice what to do with it, the only real failure is what you fail to learn from.

Number-

You use it to just hate yourself, you can learn it to be better next time.

Number seven. If you could sit on a park bench and have a conversation with someone alive or dead, who would it be?

Dostoevsky or Tolstoy. If they were talkative, I don't know. Either one of them not being interested in talking to me.

That's where the coffee comes in.

Right. So, that has to be with that that they would actually be interested in talking to me. Where did you get the idea for that scene?

Number eight, what tool or resource best helps you run your life or your business?

A Course in Miracles.

Number nine, share one thing on your bucket list.

Serenity. In terms of the externals, I've done ... Oh, I know what be on that. But yeah, it's not so much my bucket list because, when I think of bucket list, it's you can make it happen. So, I don't think I have anything left on my bucket list. Okay. Well, no, I don't really think it ... No, nothing I think of is really bucket list material.

And final question, number 10. What's one thing you do to win the day?

I can be moody and I think, particularly now, I can go and sometimes I just have to proverbially throw water on me, snap out of it. And I think that's one of ... I do think happiness is a choice and I think, if I understand how do you win the day, you remind yourself you're a choice how you see this, you're a choice how you play this, you're a choice what you do with this every moment,

So good. There are a bunch of ways to connect with Marianne and we'll link to all of these in the show notes, you can follow her on Instagram @mariannewilliamson. Grab a copy of her life-changing books on Amazon and, of course, support her campaign for president at marianne2024.com. Again, all that and more will be linked in the show notes. Marianne, what an honor, thank you so much for coming on the show.

Thank you. Thank you so, so much. All my best to you. Bye-bye.