

**Tanya Geisler:** Alright, so we're now recording. Hi, Pam!

**Pamela Slim:** Hi Tanya!

**Tanya:** It's good to see you. Thank you so much for being here.

**Pam:** My pleasure.

**Tanya:** And people, if you can see anybody sort of poking out of Pam's shoulder, that's Max and he's awesome.

**Pam:** Max Mendoza, who is brave enough to be observing me in the wild today, much like Jane Goodall did with the apes, so look for the exposing, scathing blog post sometime soon, huh Max?

**Max Mendoza:** Something like that, yeah.

**Tanya:** Something like that. Hi Max, good to have you here too. It actually feels like a fun energy, it actually feels like we're being watched because ultimately, we're going to be watched because you're Pam Slim. People want to hear what you have to say.

So, you know what we're here to talk about. We're here to talk about people finding their thing. So you want to tell us a little about your thing?

**Pam:** I do. I have actually a lot of things to say about my thing because what I do is work with people generally who are wanting to start a business, so to make part of their thing the way in which they make money be in some way related to starting a business as opposed to a career.

And that path has come from a long time of working on the human side of business, first inside companies working within training and development and helping people to grow and develop within companies and then as an outside consultant where I worked in a whole bunch of companies to work with people to try to improve them from the inside. And then in the last six years I've escaped cubicle nation of working with corporate employees that want to leave and start a business.

So what's interesting is although I have many, many conversations with people about what their thing is, **I actually fundamentally don't believe there is one thing for most people**, which we can definitely get into.

I think that can be something that slips a lot of people up because they think the sky is going to open up and the answer is going to come and they're going to know their thing and they're going to tiptoe down through the pile of tulips for the rest of their life.

And it actually in my experience rarely happens like that.

**Tanya:** So how does it usually happen?

**Pam:** The broader context and the way I'm thinking about it lately is **it's related to your body of work.**

**So, your body of work is a way of thinking about everything that you do in the world, how you interact with people, the kinds of things you might physically produce,** anything from needlepoint to a book to a whole generation of really fantastic entrepreneurs. (You know, if you're somebody like a coach.)

*And so your body of work doesn't necessarily have to be around one particular thing.*

One of the examples that I like to give is actually my dad. You could definitely say for my dad that one of his big things is photography. He's been a photographer for about 50 years; he went to Brooks for anybody who knows Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara. I see your little helper's come in.

**Tanya:** That's my Max.

**Pam:** And so my dad has a huge passion for photography, and he has a huge passion for the environment. I was just telling Max that I remember growing up in 1971 in San Soma, California. My dad was on the city council and he instituted the first curbside recycling program. You know, this is 1971. Some of you watching weren't even born in 1971, right?

**Tanya:** Max.

**Pam:** Exactly my point, and so that's been a huge passion, working for open space. And then, in his little town where he lives in Port Costa, California, for about the last 15 years he's had this passion for restoring a hundred year old building. It was the old schoolhouse building in Port Costa. This beautiful old building, it was totally dilapidated and falling down, and for 15 years he and a whole number of people in his community have been slowly and painstakingly restoring this building and writing grants for it. They went through a big storm where a bunch of things broke and then they got money from FEMA, our federal emergency management association.

And this school has been this rich site of an annual talent show that they do (where everybody in the community does a big talent show fundraiser); art shows; political meetings; they've had people who do bike trips through the California coast that end up stopping there at the school.

So you can see as an example, within my dad's body of work, there are a bunch of really fantastic photographs; there are pieces of land all over northern California that he worked really hard to get created as open space

land that can't be developed on; and then there's this place that is a physical school that actually is representative as well of hundreds of thousands of conversations by community members coming together. The act of them coming together in order to do physical things to this school building has created love and connection and awareness and an amazing sense of shared responsibility and sensibility.

So that's more what I'm talking about, right? When you think about a body of work, is that it can include things that you might find about yourself where you do have a passion for coaching people, right?

**Tanya:** Yep.

**Pam:** Like totally and completely, **I will coach somebody at the bus stop whether they like it or not.** I cannot help myself. My best friend Desiree calls me a prober, she's like, "Stop probing people without their permission."

I can't help myself. I have to know. If I sit next to somebody at a luncheon, I have to figure out, "**Who are you, what's in your soul, what do you really want to do? Like, ooh, why can't you do it?**"

But that is one piece of what is my thing.

So that's a very long winded way of explaining. **If you think about your life's work as including this huge body of work that can have some disparate pieces to it, it might reduce some anxiety for thinking that there has to just be this one thing.** Like this one career that once you're an engineer or once you have this restaurant that you finally open, that that's going to be the beginning and end of your purpose in life. Like, maybe it will be. But if it's not, it doesn't mean that you can't get tremendous satisfaction and you won't create things to add to your body of work.

**Tanya:** Ooh, I love that. And you know what **you kept pulling out was your dad's values** and of course while we never coach the person who's not there, it's so clear what he really stands for and probably always has stood for. I mean, anybody who's spent a nanosecond with Pam, you know Pam's values of congregation and of community and obviously the apple not falling so far from the tree as well.

But **there's a values piece clearly, obviously, and that's like the first place we always look to. But also, I'm really appreciating not pointing to one specific thing, but it's also thematic. So maybe there's an umbrella that sort of overarches everything that we are creating. So body of work, that feels very important.** Thank you so much for that.

So thematically with your dad's case, there's the photography piece but what would you say the overarching theme, just to really dumb it down, would be in his life and who he is and what he's craving in this world?

**Pam:** Yeah, for me as I look at my dad the overall themes that I see first are really realizing that we are connected to Mother Earth and that the natural environment is a really, really, really important part of our lives and we really need to care for it. That's the biggest message that I got as his child and probably if you ask anybody who knows him. Setting up recycling programs, I was telling Max too, in his same little town for 13 years he was a volunteer recycler, so he and a team of people took everybody from the town's recycling twice a month and turned it in for money, which actually the money that they saved they used to buy the school. That's how they first got the school and started a nonprofit organization.

So little things, you could say recycling is his thing. It's actually not. **The overarching theme is really love and respect for the planet and wanting to protect and preserve it**, which you can see the school is kind of one piece of that. Instead of bulldozing it over and some new big house, it's really realizing that the way that people often get connected to the planet is by connecting with each other. And that building of community and honoring people and going back to a lot of what we have lost in being disparate and only in technology and never even talking to your neighbors, that in many ways is where people then end up being disconnected from the earth and they don't notice, they like finish a soda pop, throw it on the ground or whatever because they don't realize that we actually all do inhabit this earth.

So that's probably, as I think about it, the biggest thing that my dad has taught me is just to really be respectful of the earth. If ever I'm at a place where they don't recycle or something I start to kind of break out in a cold sweat because I'm like, "Oh my God, what would my dad say?" My dad has brought recycling back from Mexico on vacation. Okay?

**Tanya:** Wow!

**Pam:** Couldn't find a place to recycle and he was unwilling just to throw it in the trash.

**Tanya:** Wow.

**Pam:** It's telling.

**Tanya:** Yeah, I'm kind of in love with your dad. I'm kind of really in love with your dad. Oh my gosh.

**Pam:** I am too.

**Tanya:** Yeah, I suspect you are. And Max I think you're kind of in love with him too, eh? So when your people come to you and they say, "Pam, I suspect this is what's going on." You've got them looking at their body of work, is that what you do?

**Pam:** So, here's the thing, right? My dad is 77 years old. So he's had a long time. It's easy now to look at his life and to begin to extrapolate and notice what the themes are once they have actually happened.

**Tanya:** Right.

**Pam:** Now if you're earlier on in your life, you're Max's age, you're in your 20s about to graduate from ASU, Arizona State University, then there isn't maybe that same kind of level of experience that you can extrapolate from so part of what you do – I actually just did this on a coaching call today – is to **begin to just start to list ingredients**. I call it listing your own personal ingredients. So you can say, "You know what? I have a little bit of coach in me and I really love music and I think music is a very powerful thing. And I'm totally fascinated by Apple products. And I really love Thailand." **Just begin to list all of the different ingredients that can just have you become aware of yourself and what your interests are.**

And also include things like you talked about,

- What are your personal values?
- What are lines that you know you will never cross when it comes to ethics or personal values?
- What are your strengths?
- What are strengths that you have that you've noticed all the way through school?
- Are you really analytical or are you great at presentations...?

So when you have your list of ingredients, what I tell my clients is just **become ingredients in search of a recipe**.

Once again, you can eat many different plates throughout the course of your life, so at a certain stage the recipe is found in problems in the world that are meant to be solved. So you can say, "You know, it really concerns me that Canadians and USA-ans don't understand each other very well." I actually think we do, I kind of love my Canadians. But let's say that was the issue. You're like, "You know what? They think that we all only play hockey. And they think it always snows here all the time and I really want to do something in order to address that." Or you say, "You know what? It really bothers me that there are so few females in technology or in science and I really want to do something about it."

**Tanya:** Yep.

**Pam:** So that can become an area where you begin to look at on the work side that can either be as an employee or as an entrepreneur. **Where are the veins of opportunity?** Like around this particular issue, where are people really concerned about it and where are they working on it, you know? In the example of U.S./Canadian relations maybe there are a whole lot of business opportunities that we're missing because we don't really understand each other. People have no idea of the Canadian market and of all the synergies. People have just been marketing in the U.S. and they don't realize there are a lot of opportunities, and so then within that vein you say, "Okay, who's actually doing what? Is there an area where I could come in with some of my ingredients and help that situation?" Right? And if so, where are the gaps in the market, where are things that I can start to work on, and that's where you can start to find a particular area in which you could do some work.

So to use a personal example, that's part of what I saw when I did my own assessment of ingredients. I love to work with people, I love to coach, I'm fascinated by the start-up experience, I love business, I love marketing and growing businesses, there are a huge amount of people who are very highly qualified and competent who are coaching people how to do that. There are a ton of books written about it. But the gap that I've found is there were few people who were addressing the specific issue for corporate employees who wanted to leave their jobs and start a business and all of the issues that were associated with that.

So they would read all the books that just talked about, "Here are the ten steps to open for business." These books would leave out things like *how do you go through a massive identity shift? How do you tell your parents that you're going to leave your job that they had worked so hard and spent all their money to send you through college to be a doctor or to be a lawyer and here you want to go open a cookie business or something, you know? How do you have those conversations, how do you deal with fear?*

**That, for me, was an example of taking my ingredients and finding a particular place in the market that had a need for the specific kind of thing that I wanted to develop.** And so that has been my thing for the last six years, just really focusing on that - writing my blog, coaching people around it. And the example of the body of work - that's not the only thing, and now I'm at a stage where I'm like, "Okay, this has been awesome. I definitely want to continue a vein of this. What's a way to begin to grow that?" And look at what are some broader applications that can reach more people.

**Tanya:** Yeah, okay. So I have to say this - Max, I'm going to get this transcribed. I'm going to send you transcription. He is getting a hand cramp writing back there. I swear to God Pam, he's losing it. And I saw him look up a moment and there was sheer love in his eyes and I actually felt it because

he was like, "Oh, values and strengths!" Like, honestly, I felt the love in the room.

**Pam:** Total values guy, I'm telling you.

**Tanya:** Clearly and it's truth baby, it's truth. You are speaking truth and I felt it. And I just looked at Max like, yeah. So honey, I'm transcribing this, we're all good. Okay, you don't need to write anything more.

**Max:** It's funny, I was going to say. That's actually my product is about, is self-leadership. And a big project for me is finding my purpose, finding my thing, so when Pam...

**Tanya:** [Scream] I know, I know, I know, it's great.

**Max:** I was almost crying, like that little bit. I just felt emotion coming out of me, definitely.

**Pam:** That's awesome.

**Max:** I'm glad I'm here.

**Pam:** Cosmic Interference.

**Tanya:** That Pam is one resonant, mm, mm, mm. I swear to God.

You're speaking to of this I call it **the itch** – like the Canadian/U.S. Relations - *that thing that simply won't go away*. Like, try as you might, try as you might.

So I love that you're speaking to the opportunity and I think that that really is a very big conversation that does get missed, it's like, "Okay, well I really love olive oil so I definitely should import olive oils and have an olive oil store." So that's the tension of course, is the parents of that person that's like, "Really? Really? Two years of med school and olive oil? What is going on?"

And then there's also the *what's the business model look like?* And it just feels like it can really drain a lot.

So, you don't need to reveal any more than you want to, but that piece where you recognize the opportunity or the transition, were those from personal experiences that you had where you were moving from this realm to that realm and sort of felt some of those pains yourself? If yes, great - if not, an opportunity is an opportunity so I'm just wondering how you go about that one.

**Pam:** Definitely. Well yes, the only disclaimer I'll say on this is for whatever reason I have never been one who really, really struggled with what is my thing.

(Believe you me, we don't have enough time, like we need 13 hours to talk about some other things I've struggled with but that's another topic for another day.)

But for whatever reason, in my own life it's always been pretty clear. And the way it generally appears is I'll find the vein of what it is I want to be doing, and I might be in it and kind of put out that though like, "What is that next thing? What's the next thing I want to do?" And things generally open up.

Now, that said, and the reason I say that is exactly for the reason that you and I have talked about before. It's so annoying, it's like somebody who if you struggle with that issue and it isn't easy and it doesn't come and there's somebody like me. Like, "Just set the intention to the universe, man. It'll come." *That is not helpful.* And so that's where I've learned working with different people that there are particular tools to use, you know?

But that said, I remember when I was getting ready for that transition between the corporate consulting, which I did for about nine years and escaped from cubicle nation. I was definitely in that whole stew of trying to figure out exactly what I wanted to do and I took a class with a woman named Suzanne Falter-Barns that was about developing an online presence. I had been trained as a life coach with Martha Beck and I loved her methodology, but I wasn't totally vibing with just doing life coaching.

**Tanya:** Yeah.

**Pam:** Because I had this whole side that I really love business. And I spent a few months of really deep introspection of thinking about my market and sharing ideas and kind of moving things around and really putting myself intensely into figuring out what might that recipe be. And that's when I eventually hit on "Escape from Cubicle Nation", and it was something that evolved. I had no idea when I started it that it would end up kind of having the depth and breadth that it has.

**Tanya:** Yeah.

**Pam:** I really didn't, I had no idea it would turn into a book, I didn't know it would be kind of a thing. But that's an example of where many people I think don't have appreciation for how long it takes sometimes to be stewing on ideas. So in one hand it's totally okay if you're stewing on ideas and you're asking yourself questions, like *I'm sure you're going to be helping people with in the overall program and process...What are great questions to ask and how can you start to track things?*

For example, when I work with clients I suggest getting very efficient with some of the cool tools we have today (like if you're on the Mac you can use Evernote to capture ideas and links; or just have a journal that you can be taking notes). Because if you don't actually track the process of clearly identifying your ingredients in these areas of interest and examples of things that you see, it all just ends up whizzing by you and you don't have any data that you can really look at.

So **sometimes it's very important to be tracking an area of interest.** And then sometimes it's also important to **have somebody else look at it** because they can look at it with totally fresh eyes that you don't see (which is definitely a role that I play with a lot of clients where I'm like, "Wow, you have this and this and this. Have you ever thought about that?").

And that's why **it's so important to have people around you to help walk through your process.**

**Tanya:** And that actually is the story I have made up about you: That **you have intentionally and organically surrounded yourself with some pretty amazing people** (and I suspect that's been your whole life), and I have a feeling **that that plays in a little bit to the clarity that you've always had.** (This is the story that I've made up, so push back.) **That you've been cognizant of what people are always coming to you for and thanking you for,** and I have a sense that **you have a pretty strong network of people that will help you.** And you also, because connection feels like such a big value of yours and bringing people together, I have a sense that you think about ideas a lot and I suspect that that's probably part-and-parcel of how you've just got so clear, so focused...*and* how you've able to be so expansively large within this framework.

**Pam:** Well, I think for the most part it's true. It's definitely been – I'm trying to think back career wise – yeah, I think that is pretty accurate when I track back.

I was an exchange student in high school my senior year of high school – that was a totally transformational experience that exploded my brain to the whole world and all kinds of opportunities.

And I remember, I had to do a paper on U.S./Swiss relations as I was finishing up my senior year of high school work and I sent it back to my high school. And I really didn't want to do all the research in French, I was in the French speaking part so everything was in French, I got kind of lazy about it. So I'm like, "Why don't I just interview the U.S. ambassador to Switzerland? Why don't I just kind of do that?"

So I approached the office and he was very gracious, it was like one of the Cabot-Lodges, this kind of famous ambassador, U.S. family. And it was awesome and that was like a high, it was an adrenaline rush. And realizing

that I did, at 16 years old, have the capacity to just reach out to somebody who felt like they were very out of reach and *make something happen*. That's the very first significant person I can remember like that, and that's definitely been something that's followed me I think through different things that I've done.

It's just not being shy about surrounding myself with really amazing people is because I love to learn and I just get very, very stimulated by people and I learn best through other people.

And I was very lucky in that to work in situations as an employee where I had amazing mentors that ended up helping to mentor me when I went out on my own. 4

So definitely, that's made a huge difference. And I really see the work that I do in a much bigger context of a whole network of people that are working together in this area.

**Tanya:** Yeah. So you know that I love you, but now I'm like, "Okay, Pam and her dad..." I'm much more in love with you than ever. And that Max seriously is like tearing up over there.

So I had a couple more questions but I feel so complete, I mean well I would be remiss in not talking about fears, saboteurs. What tends to show up with people as they're sort of in this like, "I really want to, I really want to, I really want to..."

**Pam:** Yes, definitely. Okay, well here's a huge one when it comes to The Thing, thing. And that is that **it is not a race**, and if you **reframe it so there is not one thing in your life that you will find** but you're just open to **be curious about what is next** and **what really feels like something of interest and a very important problem for you to solve**, then that's really all that you have to think about.

What that can help you from is the agony of the equivalent of being a single person and seeing anybody who walks into the grocery store as that look that they have, Are You My Mother? And if you ever read that to your daughter, but it's like this little bird who falls out of the nest and his mom goes and flies away so he's never seen his mother before and he comes out of the egg. So he goes up to a cow and he goes up to a cat and he's like, "Are you my mother?"

That's what happens sometimes, right? Where somebody's looking for "the man" or "the woman" or "the thing" is it becomes this awful, desperate quest where you're searching for meaning outside of yourself as opposed to being really content and interested in the world and being very happy with yourself and being like, "Rock on! If somebody happens to come into my life, is interested in some of the things I'm engaged in and working on that's totally

fantastic. But my life is totally complete as it is right now." And it really, really is that equivalent.

Emotionally, if you were to capture a picture of the emotion in people's hearts when it comes to the romance side of things and "the thing" I bet it would look almost identical because people put that level of intensity on it. Like, "I must find the thing."

And very often, **what I recommend is just to really, really chill down and to pay much closer attention to what's in front of you and what's of interest, how can you be of service, how can you be of value, how can you start to experiment with some things and surround yourself with really interesting people.**

And there are many people – there are all kinds of names, scanners, multi potentials, all these really cool names that we have today – **there are many people who by their nature are never going to be designed for having one thing** and when you try to force them to do that or they feel the societal pressure, it's total agony for them.

**Tanya:** Yeah. I think that that's where the theme piece comes in as sort of a bit of saving grace. And you know, I think the comparison piece – it's like that person, "I can do that, I can do that, and I can do that." And I think that that piece there, we're losing site of the ingredients that we have. So when we look at what everybody else has around us they might have a little more cayenne than we have cumin or whatever that is.

**Pam:** Exactly.

**Tanya:** And so we just kind of can't force that to happen. Love that. I absolutely love that analogy. It's very helpful. So I feel so full. I feel so full. I feel like there's so much fantastic content. So I guess, you know I was going to ask you about how do you get your people to land their plane but I feel like we've covered all of that.

So I guess my final question would be:

What do you really want for somebody who's watching this – knowing that the people who are watching this might be seekers, might be multi potential-ites, might be on the cusp of or feeling more lost than ever or whatever it is – what is it that you want them to take away from this?

*What do you really want for them?*

**Pam:** What I want is to reframe things in terms of instead of thinking about one thing that you have to figure out in order to be happy, just **shift the**

**focus to think about what is the kind of impact that you would love to make in the world.**

And it could be just something that you're really excited to create; a thing of beauty that could be a product that doesn't involve any other people.

But the other thing could be what is some bit of a problem or something that you just really want to address.

And it goes directly to what you talked about; Martha Beck calls it 'compare and despair'. Where you're like, "Oh man, this is really my thing but look at this person! They're cuter than me and they've done it for five years and oh my God they went to Harvard." And you tell yourself all these stories.

For the most part, **when you look at what impact needs to happen** – especially around really large issues like helping people in their careers or solving hunger or inequity in the world – **there is so much more need than the people who are actually serving that need.**

**Focus on where you can make an impact based on who it is that you are.**

And that's so much less than just kind of naming what it is that you can do. It's easier to tell your relatives at the holidays what you do. It's important to sometimes have that little elevator speech so that they can feel secure knowing that you're okay taking care of yourself.

*But really what's important in the long term is the kind of impact and footprint that you're going to leave on the earth...and if you're spending all of your time in agony, beating yourself up because you don't know the thing, then you're missing this opportunity to be engaging in a bunch of really wonderful activities that are going to help make a difference in the world for things that you care about.*

And *that* is often the really fertile ground for where it is that you end up finding out areas of deep passion is by doing things, not by stepping back in analyses and reading 13 different books about *What Color is my Parachute*, (which is a great reference for sure, I love that book, right?).

**Tanya:** Yeah, sure.

**Pam:** It's important to do. **However, acting in the world and making impact is I think the way that you're going to start to get better answers to the question.**

**Tanya:** [claps] Yea! Oh Pam, I'm so, so grateful. There's so much richness here. I'm going to have a heck of a time editing it. It's a really happy

problem to have, so I'm all good with that. Thank you. I really, really appreciate your time. Max, you're truly a delight.

**Max:** Thank you.

**Pam:** It was fun having Max here, I think that's going to be a nice added bonus. I love that.

**Tanya:** Yeah, awesome.

**Pam:** Well, I love you very much. I can't wait to promote it and it's so important and I'm glad you're addressing the issue. You know, I really am.

**Tanya:** Thank you.

**Pam:** Because I always love it. I don't have all the answers when it comes to that. I love it when somebody's like, "Alright, I know what I want to do. Let's go do it." Right? And that's where I can totally take off and help.

**Tanya:** Yeah.

**Pam:** So, it's very important and it's such a huge issue for a lot of people. So you're going to find your market there.

**Tanya:** Oh, thank you so much, Pam. I'm so grateful.

**Tanya:** Adore you.

**Pam:** Canada!

**Tanya:** We love you! Bye!

**Pam:** Bye, shug.

**Tanya:** Bye, honey.