

Author and Designer Lisa Kahn: “5 Ways To Develop Serenity During Anxious Times”



Dr. William Seeds | Follow
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Spend time outside. Soaking in the natural world soothes us, heals us, and reminds us that we are all part of a greater web of life!

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As a part of my series about the things we can do to develop serenity and support each other during anxious times, I had the pleasure of interviewing Lisa Kahn.

Lisa Kahn, CEO and lead designer of Lisa Kahn Designs in Naples, Fla., offers a unique stylistic niche to the residential design world as a purveyor of calm, serene sanctuary spaces. Lisa is also the author of the [Finding Sanctuary](#) blog and the online class [Seven Days to Sanctuary](#). Her latest project is [Sanctuary Collective](#), a Facebook group that allows like-minded individuals to congregate, communicate and elevate the philosophy and notions of the sanctuary life and movement.

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Thank you so much for doing this with us! Our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you share with us the backstory about what brought you to your specific career path?

I was raising a daughter, Chloe, with special needs who went from one diagnosis, medication list, specialist, and school to another, and who required constant supervision just to keep her, her environment, and those around her safe. In order to help Chloe, I had to really dig deep to find the patience, the love, and perseverance that it takes in order to prepare her for as much independence as possible.

One day when I felt at a loss on how I would move forward, the word “sanctuary” whispered in my mind and captured my imagination. From that moment, it grew to become the heart-center of my work as an interior designer. As I began to transform our home into a serene sanctuary space for Chloe and for myself, my world changed. My spirit changed. As I created peace around me, I found peace within me. I was so very, very grateful. This powerful time in my life showed me how the concept of sanctuary needed to be central to my life and business and it also showed me that sanctuary is much more than a physical space. It’s an approach to life. And at the heart of this approach lies gratitude. Gratitude is foundational to the concept of sanctuary and a touchstone for true quality of life.

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you started your career?

My very personal struggle of raising a daughter with special needs and going through a wrenching divorce became the foundation for a new message in my interior design business — one of sanctuary and sacred, personal space. Out of the fire, a phoenix rose and I have found more meaning, fulfillment and purpose than I ever could have imagined. I needed the transforming power of adversity to find my strength, resilience and personal power.

What advice would you suggest to your colleagues in your industry to thrive and avoid burnout?

My advice would be to find the message that speaks to you most deeply in your work and use that as your springboard for everything you do. Coming from a place of purpose and meaning, you will be less prone to burnout. Working in your purpose can make a world of difference financially as well. During my most challenging time I almost lost my business. When I put my philosophy of gratitude and purpose into practice, the business bounded back and my partners, clients and vendors began responding in a wholly different and preferable way. Also, developing routines and rituals that nurture you will help you stay balanced and in a place of harmony. This can include things like daily walks, meditation, prayer, journaling, creative pursuits like painting, gardening, photography, cooking, etc. Last, following your own curiosity to learn new things and stay interested in the world around you can help you stay fresh and bring unique perspectives to your work.

What advice would you give to other leaders about how to create a fantastic work culture?

The Obstacle is the Way by Ryan Holiday made a meaningful impact on me when I was in the midst of my darkest days. The stoic philosophies showed me that what is difficult and challenging for us is based entirely on our perspective. We can find the opportunity there for growth and expansion if we have the right mindset and mental discipline.

Ok, thank you for all that. Now let’s move to the main focus of our interview. Many people have become anxious just from the dramatic jolts of the news cycle. The fears related to the coronavirus pandemic have only heightened a sense of uncertainty, fear, and loneliness. From your experience or research what are five steps that each of us can take to develop serenity during such uncertain times? Can you please share a story or example for each?

- Care for ourselves consistently and gently.** Self-care makes all the difference when we feel anxious, worried or wounded by the events happening around us. Do things that nurture you and are personally fulfilling. Find the thing or things that brings you out of your bubble of anxiety and into a better place. If meditation is not for you then maybe digging in the dirt or trimming bushes is. Some people find great peace in uncluttering and rearranging their closets and drawers.
- Get enough sleep.** This can be hard, especially when crisis threatens to overwhelm us. But focus on getting enough sleep because we can’t respond well to things around us when we are exhausted. Use tools that help you sleep — drink herbal teas, take a warm bath or shower, use magnesium spray or lotion to help you relax. Calm your mind with meditation.
- Stay away from the mainstream news media.** Limit your news intake to a lesser amount, but of a higher quality. Don’t feel bad if there are days when you just have to unplug. We all must do it!
- Set up a personal sanctuary space in your home and/or office.** Select a space where you can be surrounded by an environment that nourishes you, that soothes and comforts you. Do what you can to fully decompress in that space. Listen to soft music. Light candles or incense. Pet your dog. Set out some crystals that absorb negativity like smoky quartz. Read something inspiring.
- Spend time outside.** Soaking in the natural world soothes us, heals us, and reminds us that we are all part of a greater web of life!

From your experience or research what are five steps that each of us can take to effectively offer support to those around us who are feeling anxious? Can you explain?

- Be compassionate, kind and warmly human.** Come to each interaction with another person understanding that we are all a bit compromised right now.
- Take care of ourselves first.** By taking care of ourselves first makes taking care of everyone around us easier. It’s the old airline oxygen mask directive and it works wonders.
- Be extra thoughtful.** Little gestures make a big difference right now. Send a card. Text a friend. Video call your relatives. Drop off flowers or a candle on someone’s front porch. Send someone a gift or a delivery of their favorite groceries. We all need an extra bit of nurturing.
- Stay positive.** Don’t ignore the obvious crisis but don’t bemoan it either. We get what we focus on. When someone around you goes down a verbal rabbit hole of negativity, redirect the conversation to something else like a book you read or the beauty outside the window or a funny meme you saw on social media. This situation will pass and we will get through it. Constantly focusing on how hard things are makes things harder than they have to be.
- Simply ask, how can I help you right now?** Just being seen and heard is a tremendous gift when we feel out of control.

What are the best resources you would suggest to a person who is feeling anxious?

- Listen to Chad Lawson radio on Pandora
- Listen to the album *Quietude* by Philip Stephen Allen (available on iTunes and through Spotify)
- Develop a meditation practice
- Create a yoga practice
- Check out *Let’s Make Art!* An online watercolor artist paints along with you and helps you express your creativity through painting
- Read *The Obstacle is the Way* by Ryan Holiday
- Light candles like the ones from The Great Bear Wax Company — Campfire is my favorite scent
- Try Magnesium nighttime body spray from The Nue Co.

Can you please give us your favorite “Life Lesson Quote”? Do you have a story about how that was relevant in your life?

“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

I have been on an inward journey to better understand myself and the interconnectedness of everything. I have worked with coaches, taken university and online classes, read books, journaled, and followed my curious mind down myriad paths in pursuit of this deeper sense of truth and knowing. It has been the most rewarding work I’ve ever done and it affects every single aspect of my life. Through this work, I have come to understand that we truly are spiritual beings having a human experience. And that perspective is everything.

You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

It would be a movement of the ultimate expression of self-love: creating sacred, sanctuary spaces for ourselves and others. LOVE LOVE LOVE. It is the most important message that we can share. It is where everything begins. Creating sanctuary spaces helps us find peace around us to create peace within us.

What is the best way our readers can follow you online?

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