

The Art of Enough

Podcast Transcript

Episode 2 – Gaining Awareness

music:	00:07	(Music)
female:	00:07	The art of enough, with artist Jay Sullivan.
music:	00:12	(Music)
female:	00:13	Episode two, Gaining Awareness.
music:	00:19	(Music)
Jay Sullivan:	00:25	The man climbed over the mountain, the man climbed over the mountain, the man climbed over the mountain and what do you think he saw?
music:	00:35	(humming)
Jay Sullivan:	00:35	Are you always climbing the highest mountains? Always putting your self into stressful situations that require all of your skill, all of your determination, all of your energy just to get over the top and back down onto level ground.
Jay Sullivan:	00:52	Are you a perfectionist in some area of your life, your parenting, your relationships, your work, your art? Where no matter how hard you try, no matter how much progress you make it just doesn't feel like you've done enough.
Jay Sullivan:	01:10	Welcome to the Art of Enough, a podcast series that can help you understand the causes of not feeling enough and provide some guidance on how psychology, neuroscience and creative process can help you transcend this and other problematic emotions.
Jay Sullivan:	01:30	Hi I'm artist Jay Sullivan. In the first podcast we explored how my feelings of not being enough started in childhood. I explained that when I was a young child my father had a series of bipolar episodes that forced him to leave the home. The five year old me thought it was my fault and it caused me to adopt a

pattern of behavior that I naively thought would keep it from happening again. Namely, my drive to be better, to do more, to be the perfect kid, to climb the highest mountains.

- Jay Sullivan: [02:03](#) In this podcast we're going to explore awareness. Specifically how I became aware over the course of many years of the impact that my fathers mental illness had upon my life and how it caused me to be a habitual mountain climber.
- Jay Sullivan: [02:19](#) For most of my life I was unaware of why I was always climbing the highest mountains and I rationalized it normal. It was necessary to my life as an entrepreneur, as a creative professional, as one who committed to social justice and helping others.
- Jay Sullivan: [02:35](#) Doing more than people expected of me lead to many successes in my life but it also lead to great anxiety. Many times I'd find myself in great stress after attempting to do to much, after putting too much on my plate. And then I'd ask myself "why did I do this to myself again?", "why did I do this to myself again?"
- Jay Sullivan: [02:59](#) The pain of having to ask this question over and over again, over may years, finally lead me to seek answers, to seek awareness.
- Jay Sullivan: [03:11](#) Jean Claude Van Itallie is a long time meditator, self identified, habitual self improver, playwright of over 30 plays and author of the book Tea with Demons. He spoke to me from Shantigar, a creative retreat center he founded western Massachusetts.
- Jean Claude Van: [03:29](#) Its very difficult as you are in your life having your problems to turn around so to speak. To look at this enormous demon of your past. It takes courage to look at these demons, to say my life has been run by that for so many years. That I'm not really in logical, rational control.
- Jean Claude Van: [03:53](#) Becoming aware of them is a major step. The awareness itself makes a huge difference. It's like a spot light, it's light, it's turning light on that which has been unseen, which has been in the dark. The light of awareness mitigates the demon.
- Jay Sullivan: [04:17](#) I've spent the last 30 years trying to see what previously unseen. To gain awareness of the demons as Jean Claude might say. I followed many different paths, from reading books on neuroscience and attending Tony Robbins seminars, to going to immersive ten day transformational retreats, to experiencing re birthing and dance therapy's. To... well many, many more.

Jay Sullivan: [04:43](#) In this podcast I'll explain how several of these paths, meditation, psychotherapy and art making all gave me meaningful insight into my mountain climbing addiction during the creation of the Art of Enough. And led to positive emotional and psychological change.

Jay Sullivan: [05:02](#) Meditation, psychotherapy and art making all in some way are technics for becoming aware of problematic emotions and experiences that lie in the subconscious. And bringing them into the conscious mind, so hopefully you can let go of them.

Jay Sullivan: [05:17](#) (deep breath)

Jay Sullivan: [05:34](#) Ommmmmmmm

Jay Sullivan: [05:36](#) (deep breath)

Jay Sullivan: [05:36](#) Ommmmmmmm

Jay Sullivan: [05:36](#) (deep breath)

Jay Sullivan: [05:36](#) Ommmmmmmm

Jean Claude Van: [05:42](#) Meditation is a technique to achieve awareness. Not a technique to achieve awareness of any particular thing. But it's a technique for entering a state of awareness.

Jean Claude Van: [06:00](#) Mediation is a kind of letting go. What you let go into, well your breath. You pay attention to your breathing. It's a way of exploring inner space. Just becoming aware, awareness is a great tool.

Jay Sullivan: [06:21](#) (deep breath)

Jay Sullivan: [06:21](#) Ommmmmmmm

Jay Sullivan: [06:21](#) (deep breath)

Jay Sullivan: [06:21](#) Ommmmmmmm

Jay Sullivan: [06:21](#) (deep breath)

Jay Sullivan: [06:37](#) Ommmmmmmm

Jay Sullivan: [06:44](#) I was sitting on a mediation pillow in my upstairs bedroom on a Sunday afternoon and was angry. Angry like I had never been angry before angry. I was playing on a baseball team for the first

time in many years. It was the team that I found through the newspaper and I didn't know any of the other players and they didn't know me.

- Jay Sullivan: [07:08](#) I had played baseball in high school and college, so I was used to being one of the starters. Well, on this team I found myself on the bench. "How could this be?" If there was one thing that I'd always been good at it was baseball.
- Jay Sullivan: [07:27](#) After the second Sunday of sitting on the bench I left the field very, very angry. I arrived home furious. I had just learned about meditation, so in my angry state I sat on a pillow and just tried to meditate on this feeling of anger.
- Jay Sullivan: [07:49](#) Soon in my minds eye I saw a horizon with a black cloud. There was a black cloud and it was coming towards me faster and faster and then [whookp 00:08:03], blackness. In that instant it hit me, "oh yeah" my father had been in a psychiatric hospital when I was a child.
- Jay Sullivan: [08:19](#) He was mentally ill, he was bipolar. I hadn't thought about my fathers trips to the psychiatric hospital in 25 years, but after this meditation experience it was a quick leap to understand how this past experience was causing me to be very angry in the present.
- Jay Sullivan: [08:42](#) Before his mental illness took control, he and I spent summer evenings together playing catch in the backyard. Throwing a baseball back and forth, back and forth. I was very good at this game of catch and it made me feel deeply connected to my father. Then he was suddenly gone, he was no longer there to play catch with.
- Jay Sullivan: [09:05](#) It was very painful and it made me very angry as a young child. This moment of meditation brought the awareness that my anger at age 30 was not about not being able to play on Sunday, but was more connected to not being able to play catch with my dad as age five.
- Jay Sullivan: [09:29](#) This realization was astounding to me. It was the first time that I became aware that an event from my past was controlling my present.
- Jay Sullivan: [09:41](#) (deep breath)
- Jay Sullivan: [09:43](#) Ommmmmmmmmm

- Jay Sullivan: [09:46](#) So meditation has been a valuable tool for gaining awareness. Psychotherapy or maybe better known as just therapy these days has also been instrumental in helping me explore the subconscious. To become aware of an experience or a story that's driving an unwanted behavior or belief.
- Jay Sullivan: [10:08](#) Awareness in the therapy setting many times comes by focusing on the feeling connected with the past experience or story. Therapist and educator Bob Szita who has spent three decades counseling individuals and family's spoke to me from his office in Freehold New Jersey. He explains the connection between present feelings and past experiences.
- Bob Szita: [10:32](#) The way to get back to those forgotten events, is to start with the feeling. I will ask people to take a breath, relax, close your eyes. I may even do a little relaxation activity to get out of the present and to focus on the feeling. And then say when else in your life did you have that feeling or a similar feeling? And often in a relaxed, you know kinda semi meditative state that feeling will bring out memories.
- Jay Sullivan: [11:14](#) Sometimes these memories trigger berried inner voices. Voices that you developed in child hood in response to the world around you. One of these berried voices from my past first came into my awareness during a therapy session.
- Jay Sullivan: [11:30](#) It was several years before I started the project but in many ways it foreshadowed the Art of Enough. I don't remember the context but in the middle of focusing on a feeling I had an emotional cathartic release. And this phrase came screaming into my brain "no matter what I do it will never be enough. No matter what I do it will never be enough."
- Jay Sullivan: [11:54](#) As you can imagine if you had this inner voice that you will never be enough no matter what you do and you're an overachiever, which compels you to be constantly doing more. Life can be very frustrating because no matter what you do or how much you do it, it's never going to be enough.
- Jay Sullivan: [12:17](#) Coming to the awareness that I was operating this way was a very helpful first step towards untangling and disempowering these two conflicting beliefs. But it was only a first step. It would be a few years before I was ready to tackle this issue head on in a major art project.
- music: [12:38](#) (Music)

- Jay Sullivan: [12:39](#) So far we've covered the role of meditation and psychotherapy in the creation of the Art of Enough. Next up is art making or creative process. One note before we start much of what I present in these podcasts is not DIY, meaning do it yourself. I'm continually interacting with a group that includes a therapist, meditation and breath work coaches, art colleagues and other resources throughout the creative and art making process. So if you're going to start exploring past experiences and emotions in your art making process or in any process, I highly recommend that you work with a therapist, a coach or an advisor or all of the above to help you get to a positive outcome.
- Jay Sullivan: [13:26](#) The Art of Enough as a formal art making project first took shape when I was working on a different project. This one about family ancestry. I was working on a series of photographs about my long deceased great grandfather, a coal miner in the early 1900s. He and his wife had eight children, and unlike other families who took their children out of school at around age 12 so that they could work in the mines to help support the family. He and his wife kept the children in school.
- Jay Sullivan: [13:57](#) Most of them went on to careers outside the mines. My grandmother one of the children, went on to become a head nurse at one of New York's largest hospitals. As I contemplated one of the photographs, one that symbolized my great grandfathers death from black lung disease, a question entered my conciseness. Did he feel like he had done enough? For all that my great grandfather had done for his children, getting them educated, so they could leave the mines and then seeing the impact that had on their children. Did he feel like he had done enough?
- Jay Sullivan: [14:38](#) This question lead to this verse about my great grandfather Charles Spellman.
- Jay Sullivan: [14:45](#) "Spellman a simple gravestone with a simple name. Did I do enough? Below this ground of ash and rain, when will I be enough? Four children grown but another two maimed, why did I not do enough? A doctor, a lawyer, a nurse, a friend, why can't this be enough? A simple gravestone with a simple name, did I do enough? Below this ground of ash and rain when will say enough"
- Jay Sullivan: [15:37](#) One of my colleges at the time that this verse was about me. During the writing process a voice from my subconscious had risen up and infused the work, which of course is what all artist want. This written verse emerging during an art making process

was the clearest indication yet that my feeling of no being enough, we needed to move to the front burner.

- Jay Sullivan: [16:02](#) I started the Art of Enough as an intentional daily creative and art making process about a year later.
- music: [16:09](#) (Humming)
- Jay Sullivan: [16:11](#) While I'm involved in making art I'm usually working with photography or video, but also voice, movement and acting exercises are a valuable tool. Jean Claude Van Itallie and performance coach Carol Fox Prescott first introduced me to acting exercises and personal story telling techniques as a way to personal awareness.
- Jay Sullivan: [16:35](#) The goal of these exercises are to help actors and non actors be more creative and more spontaneous. Much like mediation it's a process of clearing out the conscious mind to stop thinking about the technical skills of acting or performance and work or create from the subconscious.
- Jay Sullivan: [16:54](#) I use these acting exercises in several different ways, sometimes I use them early in the process as a gateway to awareness. Improvising with my body and voice around a particular theme, to see what emerges from my subconscious. Or other times late in the process as part of the final art works as I did when I created a series of Charlie [Chaplinese 00:17:15] video self portraits.
- Jay Sullivan: [17:18](#) In the Art of Enough it was midway through the project. I decided to revisit Jean Claude and his transformational acting exercises to further explore my feeling of not being enough. This time in a guided workshop environment.
- Jay Sullivan: [17:34](#) I was standing on top of a hillside overlooking a fall colored valley at Jean Claude Van Itallie's creative retreat center in western Massachusetts. Jean Claude asked each of us from the group to stand up one at a time and tell us about dream that we had, had the night before. I had done this exercise many times and I knew part of the technique was avoid mapping out the whole story beforehand.
- Jay Sullivan: [18:01](#) Its best that you have a general idea of the dream but when you stand up you stay with your breath and then just let come out what ever needs to come out. To be spontaneous.

- Jay Sullivan: [18:11](#) My intent was to tell a dream about being at a baseball stadium and not being able to hit the baseball. But when I checked in with my breath and waited for an impulse, I started retching, retching, retching, retching. People later said that it looked like an exorcism. When the retching subsided, it suddenly and briefly turned into laughter and then the experience was over.
- Jay Sullivan: [18:42](#) Looking back I now realize that this moment of exorcism was the start of a process of freeing myself from the dark corners of my past. But it was just a start because in that moment on top of the hill I was still securely tethered to the pain of the past. But for one briefest of moments I had let it all go.
- Jay Sullivan: [19:07](#) Six months later the process of freeing myself from this self imposed entanglement with the past would take the next step and find its way into my artwork and my life.
- Jay Sullivan: [19:19](#) You'll hear about this in podcast four.
- Jay Sullivan: [19:22](#) (deep breath)
- Jay Sullivan: [19:22](#) Ommmmmmmm
- Jay Sullivan: [19:24](#) (deep breath)
- Jay Sullivan: [19:30](#) Ommmmmmmm
- Jay Sullivan: [19:33](#) During the Art of Enough at the suggestion of Jean Claude I reinstated a dormant meditation practice as a way to slow down and stop climbing the highest mountains. Pst
- Jay Sullivan: [19:45](#) He emphasized that it was important that I meditate daily even if it was just for ten minutes. An instruction that harkens back to a guideline from podcast one, repetition is necessary to long term change.
- Jay Sullivan: [19:58](#) So I started a ten minute daily mediation practice, I would highly recommend it and if you don't have prior experience with meditation, there are plenty of resources online to help you get started.
- Jay Sullivan: [20:10](#) Ten minutes of mediation a day does not seem like a lot, but just take the time to sit and pay attention to your breath is some way to reinforce the notion that I did not have to do anything. That sitting there for ten minutes was the antidote to thinking that there was a high mountain somewhere to climb.

- Jay Sullivan: [20:31](#) Plus I developed some new incites. Not deep held long experiences or memories but moments of incite or clarity that helped me slow down, reduce anxiety and become more creative. I can't say these incites came during the meditation process but I can say they emerged because I was meditating, and that created a heightened sense of awareness long after the meditation session ended.
- Jay Sullivan: [20:56](#) I adapted these incites into some guidelines. Simple phrases that help me remember them so that they become repetitive part of my routine. Remember repetition is necessary to long term change.
- Jay Sullivan: [21:10](#) One incite was that I had the most stress when I felt rushed. Those instances when I was afraid that I would run out of time and whatever it was that I was working on wouldn't be good enough. I developed this guideline to help reduce this impulse. When feeling stressed simplify the deliverable or change the delivery date. Changing the complexity of the deliverable makes it easier to complete. And of course changing the delivery date gives me more time to complete it. Both making the process less stressful and more enjoyable.
- Jay Sullivan: [21:48](#) Yes I understand that this may not always be possible apply this guideline in low risk situations to start and then go from there and see what happens. You'll probably find out as I did that many times in the past I was over delivering and causing myself a lot of work and a lot of stress.
- Jay Sullivan: [22:09](#) Also I've always been driven by getting to the end result. Making the big goal, the big check mark, getting over the top of the mountain. So, during the Art of Enough I started to work with this guideline, instead of goal based experiences have time based experiences. I try to keep my focus on experiencing the moment of creating art instead of getting to the end result.
- Jay Sullivan: [22:34](#) One way I did this was to set strict time limits to my art making time. For example I wrote from 10 am to 1 pm, then I took a two hour lunch break and I worked in the studio from 3 to 6 pm. So, instead of trying to quote "get something done today" end quote. I just focused on experiencing what I was doing in the moment and when the time allotted for that day ended I stopped working. Whether I was in the middle of sentence, setting up a shot, or retouching an image, I just stopped.
- Jay Sullivan: [23:08](#) By focusing on the moment and not on the end result it makes the conclusion of the project when I get there feel more like a

gradual soft landing rather than my previous experiences which felt more like a big push up a very large mountain.

- Jay Sullivan: [23:26](#) Finally I had to remind myself to become comfortable with doing less. Most of us who are addicted to our achieving are doing, doing, doing because we believe something bad will happen if we don't. Once you start doing less, like spending ten minutes meditating day or delivering a less complex deliverable and your life gets better instead of worse.
- Jay Sullivan: [23:49](#) (laugh)
- Jay Sullivan: [23:49](#) You start to become comfortable doing less and you start to strengthen those connections in the brain. Doing less now becomes normal.
- music: [23:58](#) (Music)
- Jay Sullivan: [23:59](#) You can learn more about these three guidelines and other guidelines in podcast five.
- music: [24:06](#) (music)
- Jay Sullivan: [24:07](#) He stopped and enjoyed the view, he stopped and enjoyed the view, he stopped and enjoyed the view, bum bum bum bum bum bum.
- Jay Sullivan: [24:19](#) In this podcast we explored meditation, psychotherapy and art making as ways to become aware of limiting experiences and behaviors that reside in the subconscious and bring them to the surface. In the next podcast I want to talk about a tool that is essential to all three of these, that is the breath.
- Jay Sullivan: [24:40](#) Yes, breathing. As we learned in this podcast it's the foundation of meditation and it's a tool of psychoanalysis. It's also essential in creative arts particularly in performing arts. So in the next podcast we'll explore how proper breathing can reduce anxiety, important if you want to stop climbing the highest mountains, increase awareness and increase creativity.
- music: [25:07](#) (music)
- Jay Sullivan: [25:07](#) This has been the Art of Enough, I'm Jay Sullivan and may your day be filled with awareness.
- music: [25:14](#) (music)

