Robin Monroe- Episode #2 \_Create Thread\_ - 9\_14\_23, 11.48 AM

[00:00:00] Hi,

and welcome to our podcast, Shocker's Learning Out Loud. I'm your host, Dr. Amber Anderson. And I'm your host, Dr. Pam O'Neill. Join us as we discuss everything online and adult learning. Well, welcome back to our, uh, Shocker's Learning Out Loud podcast. Welcome back, guys. Yeah, good to be here. Uh, we are joined by Robin Monroe, a, uh, an adult learner here at Wichita State.

And I don't know if you guys just heard it, but our refrigerator just kicked on, so that's, you're gonna hear all kinds of weird noises. Yeah, this is us giving you real life. Yep, this is real life as an adult learner. Uh, but let's go ahead and get things started. Are you ready? I'm ready. Dr. Anderson? I'm ready.

Okay. So, uh, we'll make, start things off really simple. What's your name? I can, I, I know that one. I'm going to pass this [00:01:00] test. I can tell. Okay. My name is Robin Monroe. Okay. And you are? I am a 55 year old sophomore. Yay, yes. If you are snapping. Yes. And I did a little, uh, not cyber stalking, but kind of. You are pre social work, yeah?

I am. I am into ADS. And something else that I found out while cyber stalking you, um, you have a pretty good grade point average, don't you? I do. I, I do as of this moment. I do. As of the last time I checked this morning, I do. Um, I have a 4. 0. I transferred in with it. That's amazing. From my, um, time at Pratt Community College.

And I graduated from the. nursing program with an associate's degree in, uh, 2001. Good job. Did you live in Pratt? I did not. Okay, you did the [00:02:00] drive. I came in, this was, of course, before any online or Zoom or any of that, so everything was done on campus aside from clinical training, which you could kind of choose where you did that, and I did that mostly in Wichita in the evenings.

And, um, I had two small children, and it was not too much unlike today because I have two new two small children, my grandchildren, so yeah, I just never learn, you know, I just never learn, it's like, so yeah, I transferred in with that, and I have thus far maintained it, so yeah, that's nice. Do you feel like you were a 4.

0 in high school or do you, do you think that you have like dynamically changed into a superhero in higher ed? Well, I feel like I have the potential to be a 4. 0 in high school for sure. And um, I, I was one of [00:03:00] those kids that, and of course we would identify them earlier. Um, now it's fortunate we know more now than we did.

In the 80s, early 80s, when I was a student, um, in, in high school, in junior high, and, um, you know, I had some mental health challenges in those times, and some trauma and things that today we have support for in the schools. In those days, it was just one day you were, uh, an achieving student, and the next day you were a bad...

Other days not. Yeah. Yeah. And then the next day you were a bad kid without any question as to... Hey, what might have made this change in the student? Yeah, so that was never really addressed and I don't have any hard feelings because I understand that we have all evolved since then So, so I think I certainly had the potential to be and did not That's so important that you bring that up because I've been kind of discovering [00:04:00] that about myself I was in grade school and my brother lost his left leg in a farming accident She's writing a book about it What?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. I'm also writing a book. Stay tuned. Stay tuned. We'll put a pin in that. Here's the thing. After it happened, my studies kind of took a second place, or they weren't as important because of that PTSD of living through that and everything. And nobody recognized that at the time. Today it would have been recognized.

Absolutely. So how many of us You, myself, experienced something like that and maybe holding them back from coming to Wichita State or anywhere to getting that degree. So um, applause to you for doing that because it's not easy, uh, coming back. Right, and it took a, it was a, you know, it was a long road and um, a lot of, [00:05:00] Unfortunate turns along the way, but, but this was always my goal.

This was always my dream and I, I always felt like this is, I just fit in this, in this environment. Right. I love it. I love school. I love the learning part. I love the social part. Yeah. I'm the part, I'm the old lady that's walking around and just, Hi! Hi! Hi! That might be us too. Oh yeah, I'm just, because I'm just happy to be here.

Yeah, I think you realize how fortunate... It's a different vibe. Oh, oh yeah. that you are to even be able to get your degree. Am I wrong? Uh, no, no, it's... The fact that, you know, I've lived through some of the, some of the things that I have, and, and both literally and, and, you know, metaphorically just lived through it and was able to tell the tale, so to speak, I think that's what makes me, um, [00:06:00] driven as, as a student and also appreciative of everything that, especially this office, I mean, um, I just, I just cannot, I don't even know where I would be if I didn't walk through these doors.

Right. Can you tell us about the first time you walked through these doors and what that looked like? You'd probably be wandering around campus. Well the first time was I came in here on accident because I was sent from, um, the Marcus Welcome Center where I just, it was a week into classes, I drove across town.

I just got up, grabbed my keys, left my house, drove over here and enrolled. That was it. Uh huh. I, no thinking, no nothing, I said that's it and that's enough, I'm going. Went in, they helped me so much, they had to, I mean, when you, I graduated from an LPN program that has since become through a couple of different evolutions into WSU Tech.

Okay. But this was like three cycles prior to that and I was like, no, they [00:07:00] said do you go, went to WTI and I said, no, no, no. It was, it was, um. It was a, um, certified nursing program as an LPN and I graduated in 91. I mean, that's if they had nurses then. Oh my, they had schools. Well, the building it took place in is now a set of apartments in an old, you know, gentrified building downtown at any rate.

So, it took them a while to sort that out. And in the meantime, I'm, I'm like just looking around at where I'm at. And. I'm having these moments of reflection and I guess, I don't know, I just became so overcome with joy. I can't even hardly talk about it today. And I was just in tears. And all the kids that work there, kids, I say young, you know, the young adults that work in there, were looking at me and they're like, this, she's here against her wills.

Somebody has dropped her off here. She does not. [00:08:00] Like it, she's, does she need a hug or, yeah, that's her heart, but I don't wanna hug her. 'cause like really the really crying and I was, and I was walking around the ca across the campus and I was just, I cannot believe it. I, I'm here, I did it. I'm here. Yeah.

And, um, I walked in here on accident trying to go to l a s advising, said Grace Wilke. This was the first door. I said, grace Wilke. And I walked in and I remember Pam, and I remember Russell and I walked in and I, they said, Are you looking? Because again, I've been crying. I'm not a pretty crier. I'm not look like a soap opera star.

I'm blotchy. I'm red. I'm like,

I just need to see it's over there, but you're welcome to come back. And, um, so I did make my way back that very week. So why'd you come back? Because I, uh, a friend of mine, actually, I wasn't told anything at the time about anything, or [00:09:00] maybe I was and I just didn't hear it because I was so just, you know, scatterbrained, but a friend of mine said, did you get into the adult learning, um, did you go into that office?

And I said, and she had just graduated with her master's degree like a year prior. And I said, no, um, I didn't, I don't think so. And then I said, oh yeah, I did. It's kind of just. Yeah, I did go in there on accident and bawled and laughed and she said, no, no, no, go back. And I did and I came in and I just had all these questions.

I had no financial aid set up. I had nothing. I had, I didn't know how to be on, uh, this is a great example of where I was. I, I didn't, I had a discussion board in one of my classes. and on Blackboard, and I went to the discussions. I could not figure out how to reply, reply or, or start anything . And I walked and Russell goes, do you see where, where it says Create thread.

You just push that button and, [00:10:00] and, um, you're your way. Then you're gonna, and, and I said, you know, this is a perfect example of like poverty brain or not feeling adequate imposter syndrome. I should not be creating anything. You know, the word create threw me off, like, they don't want me to create, they don't want me to create.

I'm here to see them create. Yeah, I'm here to just answer somebody else. Exactly. And it was such a mind, um, like a shift in my thinking at that point that it went from I'm not an observer. I'm a participant. Yeah, I I can participate in this discussion. I I'm I'm at the table Yeah, so to speak and so so true.

It really changed a lot of things that I was able to at that point knowing Create that just push that button. He's so nice. It's so patient And I said, oh my gosh, and it just it was a little it was a bigger [00:11:00] Than what it seemed. Yeah, it was little but it was like it was a big thing. Yeah, it really was.

Well, and you bring up a couple good points one of that that's create a thread. It's the first time I thought I did the same thing. I'm like, I just need to start a discussion. Mm hmm. Not create a thread. I'm not creative What do you think I'm gonna embroider here or something? Yeah, you know with the thread but no that was Um, a really good thing that you brought that up, but the other is being able to come in and Russell, by the way, is sitting here over in his little headphones.

He's here with us, being the quiet participant. Judging us. Judging. Rightfully so. Rightfully so. I'm okay with it. Yes. Um, but, knowing that there is someone here that, Like Russell, I have two other, we have two other student assistants here that, that's what they live for, is to help students like yourself, even their boss once in a while, say, Pam, this is [00:12:00] what you do, you come over here.

And it's fantastic that we have younger people that don't know any different, and Russell and I have had this conversation before that, you know, everything, I don't. Like, people his age, millennials and, and Gen Z or whatever, I don't know all the parameters on the ages and all that, but in my, where I work and where I've worked for a number of years, I work at a diner, a doodle diner, and it is, yes, yes, it is.

And those people, I changed my life in that diner. I went from fresh out of prison to sitting here with you today. happened well in my tenure at that diner. The people you served? The people? I, both. My employers who have been so supportive and my, I mean, it's They're family to me. There's nothing. I mean if they called me in the dead of winter and said hey Robin You got a shovel.

Could you come and shovel that? [00:13:00] Sure. I'll be right there. I mean, there's no nothing I wouldn't do in there and they've done everything for me and also the people I've worked as Or met as I've worked there. I have just been important part of my life But they get people hit my point was that people in that age group kind of they don't They get kind of a bad rap for not being, quote, hard workers, you know, and it's not true.

It is not true. It is absolutely not true. It's just different. And they've learned to be... More effective workers, more effective communicators, they're efficient, they're used to getting information at their fingertips at any time of the day or night. Remember when we'd have to wonder about something and go, huh?

I don't know, whatever, and go on to the next thing or spend hours in books and looking and finding. Well, they've eliminated the need for that and so they've, they're more efficient, they're more effective. And, and in [00:14:00] my experience here, especially, they've been nothing but kind, nothing but helpful.

Nobody's ever just, I get kind of irritated when I hear people put down the younger generations because I'm like, no, no, you should see the, the people I work with. I can't even call them kids. They're adults. They're working just as hard as I was when I was an adult learner getting my degree. Do not dismiss the generation below us or the ones after that.

Absolutely not. And they're just so, if you, if you can stand back a second and listen to what they have to say, they're going to teach a better way to do what we've been so laboriously doing this, this thing. And they're like, why? Do, push. Push create thread, you

know. And the name of our podcast. Create thread. [00:15:00] And one of the things that Robin just brought up is that learning out loud moment. And it's kind of like, that's right where it is. Am I wrong? That it's create the thread. That's your learning, and I think you're learning out loud moment. And it gives you this permission, or for me it did, it gave me this internal permission to Step up, you know, if it says create do that if it says, you know, I wasn't I think mostly because I had it like my seatbelt on with Russell I could be like, yeah, I'm just gonna dive in and know that if I get something really messed up I can go into the office, you know with My tail between my legs and go I've really done the thing now, and I don't know what it is that I've done, but it's something.

Can you undo it? Yeah, well, you buy it, and oh, usually it's just boom, boom, and that's it, you know. So, I do have that supporting backup of knowing that this office is available [00:16:00] any time, you know. Right. And it's just, it's such a resource, and I work with, uh, women and, and, you know, People that I know that are my age that say well, I always wanted to do that Well, they've learned not to say that around me because I say hey, I know exactly the way to go You know, follow me.

I know exactly what to do I can plug you in with the best people and oh, I don't have the money. I don't have the money It's not a money thing. It's not you know, so they've been and my I was included in that group We've all been conditioned if you're raised poor that that's And I'm a first generation student because of that.

That's not for us. That's not for you. You know, get a job at, you know, wherever and just be happy with that. Yeah. And be grateful you got that job. Exactly. Our parents don't know what a credit hour is. They couldn't explain, explain how the university works. So it is very, you do walk on campus [00:17:00] feeling like a foreigner.

Yeah. You do. And that imposter syndrome. Boy, did I suffer big time from that. Yeah. Whew. It can be, it can be rough. So you've kind of, just FYI, we've got these sheets of questions sitting in front of us and Robyn's just kind of like gone through and I'm like, okay, she checked off that one. She's talked about her support system.

She's talked about, you know, the advantages of being an adult learner. And question number seven, if you look at that, I don't even know that, maybe we start taking that question out, Amber. And the question is, what are some of the challenges you face as an adult learner? Have you faced any challenges, or was that it, you know?

Well, I think, I think any challenges I face, I would face in the job that we were told to go get, or anything else. You know, I face the same challenges that any single... working person who's raising children, [00:18:00] you know, I, I daycare, you know, logistics, getting everything. Yeah, of course. And so I don't feel like, I feel like I'm going to be facing these challenges no matter what.

So I may as well be doing something that I'm passionate about and doing something that in the end can maybe help me and your kids to resolve these challenges for other women coming up. Yeah, that's my goal is to see later. Maybe my granddaughter won't have to, you know, she won't have that. She won't have that thinking that you and me and all I think.

All first generation learners have right? And my grandma Robyn did it. Yeah, let's do some doing it about day care for students. Let's do something about. Um, you know, making it easier to keep the bills paid and the roof over your head and the children taken care of while also [00:19:00] trying to achieve and trying and working and doing all the things.

Let's, let's do that. And so I feel like being here makes me a part of the eventual solution. Right. Right. Awesome. Um, but as far as being challenged, I think that, um, I, I don't think I'm any more challenged, everybody's got their, their things and you, when you see, you know, when you see these people walking around out here, every one of them has a story, something they've had to overcome to be a part of this and it just makes it that much more special.

That's why we started this podcast to tell your story, to tell the adult learner story and make it so that, you know, someone who may be listening to this. You can go, oh, well, Robbin did it, she, look at her, she's 55 years old, she's working, she has these children, the grandchildren she's taking care of. If she can do it, I can do it.

Or you have your doctorate and you still deal with [00:20:00] imposter syndrome. Right, yes. You still have to unpack that. Yeah. That work. That poverty brain is, is a thing. A friend of mine shared with me, do you remember when K Tag came into existence and you could get it for your car, car, you could drive through?

Well, surely that's not, you know, for me, that's a, that's a luxury that isn't, that, you know, has to cost money, it has to be a thing. So it's all the way down to the little bitty conveniences like a K Tag. That our brains tell us. We're not worth it. We, we don't get, that's not for us. It's for them. Oh, you're so right.

And yeah, we are not, we have to go through the thing, dig through our sticky console and pull out quarters and do all that. No, it is for everybody. And just like this university is for everybody. Yes, yes, everybody. Absolutely. There's nothing I [00:21:00] mean, I have got more barriers to anything and I, and I will go ahead and just take credit for every one of those barriers through the years of bad decision making and, you know, all the other things and, um, and once you all those, uh, yes, those decisions, those bad choices that we've all made.

Yeah, oh yeah. Oh yeah. We're sitting here, you know, and we have, Amber and I have our doctorates, Russell's over there with the headphones on, my student assistant, he's, um, overcoming his own barriers in getting a degree. And he's brilliant. My gosh. So smart. So nice. Oh my gosh. He's wonderful. Now I'm going to have to take him down a notch after this.

We're going to have to edit that out. Just joking. We could, but guess who does the editing? There we go. That's what that's the editing. So yeah, Robin. Did you have a day where you were just like, oh, this is the worst day ever I hate my job. I hate my life. I hate where I'm [00:22:00] at and I am I'm going back to college or I need to talk to somebody.

I need to start asking some questions Was there a day that happened for you or was it more like? Over the years. Over the years. It was a, it was a, a lot of days like that. And I think especially after I had, uh, got custody of my grandkids and I'm doing this job that is, again, I love and I'm grateful for, but it's physically exhausting.

It's, I work every weekend. It's mentally taxing. It's like at the end of the day, the sound of the human voice. It makes you just want to crawl under the table and when you're raising kids, that's not an option. So you have to still be present and still be engaged and still have some time with them. And I knew that I had to make some changes.

I was, I had to start, you know, early, I will say [00:23:00] 10 or 11 years ago when I first got out of prison and I was starting my life over, you're in that short game. The day to day game. Survival. How are you gonna put a roof over your head today? Mm hmm. You know, uh, how are you going to Where are you gonna live so you can walk back and forth to work?

How are you gonna eat? I mean just the very basic day to day things and eventually over the course of staying with it going just going to work every day Didn't you know making better choices putting what money you can back and you know growing at each Every year you just get a little better and a little better.

You can start playing a little longer game. You can get your credit straightened out. You can get your record expunged. You can get all these things that are pointing you back onto the, onto track. And that's kind of, and education was always. I just, I just want to go back to school. I just want to go back to school.

As always, people would say, if you could do anything, you know, the conversations you [00:24:00] have with your friends, what would you do if you could do anything? Or if you won the lottery, what would you do? I would go to college. I would go to law school. I would go to, I would do something like that. You wouldn't have to.

It wouldn't matter to me. That was my goal. That is what I want to do. And like when you see the course catalog and you see all these cool classes, I'm like, Oh, wouldn't that be cool? You know, and so, but yeah, just to be able to do that and, and I am doing that. So it's like all these years, it was just a build up to be able to do not what I have to do, but what I absolutely love to do, what I've always wanted to do, and I'm doing it.

You're doing it. It's incredible. It's just I can't tell you, every day I'm like, I had to tape a, a thing for my social work class. Just a brief introduction. Of course it turned into a, I'm just so grateful for everything because I just don't know what other word to say. Honestly, I'm [00:25:00] excited and I'm motivated.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I'm grateful. I'm so grateful for it. And just the people I've, you know, in this room and the. Everybody I come across, you know, and the, the comp professor I had when I first got back who was so kind to me and didn't say out loud that I was crazy. But I was like, and anytime he had an office, I'm like, okay, is this okay?

Is this right? Cause I love, I read all the time and so I know that my writing is. It's not what I read. And it's like, oh, this is not, and so it would change, and you know what I mean, like everybody's just been so helpful and understanding, and it's okay, you know, and I feel much better this semester. I just feel like I'm getting my, getting my groove, you know.

I think you bring home a point that Amber and I said on the first episode we ever recorded was that if you show up. [00:26:00] You're going to get noticed. You're going to get these opportunities. These people are, you know, these people, um, professors and staff are going to help you because you're helping yourself.

And, um, one of the ways that Robin has shown up, like, in our office and, Osher Scholarship. These things, yeah, these things happen because you showed up. I, I was, again, and I send Pam the, the emails like, Oh, I'm so grateful, thank you so much. It's just, it's, it's incredible that it, it is, it is so rewarding along the way that when people notice that you're doing the work and doing the right thing and, um, going to the Adult Learner of the Year Award.

Yeah. Last spring. It was so exciting to me, you know, to see, and everyone in that room, again, had a story. Yes. [00:27:00] Had a, had a really good story and an involved story, and they, all of these roads that we all traveled in led us all to this very spot right now at this very time, and there's, there's a reason for that, you know, I believe that, and I think being an adult student, having had.

These experiences, good and bad, it gives you the opportunity to share that knowledge without, maybe you can spare these, you know, young women that, um, and young men from having to learn these lessons the hard way. Maybe there are ways that, sure. That they can just be here and have a good life going forward.

So. Yeah, they're still going to make mistakes, but maybe, you know, if they learn from you what, you know, what not to do. Yep. I made a lot of poor choices in school, and I had bad semesters, and um, if I can save anybody from making any of [00:28:00] those mistakes, I'm happy. That's a gift that you give, when you can do that, for sure.

Um, I think that about wraps up for our time, um. We're already at time. That was really fine. Yeah, I know. Right? I could sit here and talk the rest of the day to Robin. I know. Um, just as, I think, uh, we talked about your soccer, your learning out loud moment kind of be create the thread, right? Yes. Yes.

Absolutely. So, what advice do you have for other adult learners who are here at Wichita State? Yeah. I would say, um. First of all, to find your way into this office. It is, if not, if you never even come back in here, you know, you know that the people are here to support you. Right. In any way. I mean, can somebody help me with, you know, A laptop?

With a laptop that I thought I knew what to do with, and it's... Very expensive paperweight right now. It's pretty. Very pretty. And I thought I did the pretty color, but I don't know how to do [00:29:00] anything. And come in and just spend time helping you with, you know. And, um, also to just be gentle with yourself and know that the fact that you came in, you walked in the doors of the Marcus Welcome Center.

you did it right there. You won. Show up. Show up right there. You won. You show up every day. Have a great attitude and, and you can strive for a 4.0, but you don't have to get it. Isn't that right Robin? I, that is the truth. And I have that conversation with me myself a lot, . Okay. I do, do you know, and the only reason, the only I bring that up because I did it too, and I thought, oh, I did too.

I thought, you know, oh, I can do this 4.0, but the truth of the matter is, Not a lot of people look at that grade point average. It's just something you do for yourself. So I was kind of able to flip that and go, I am not here to... Show what I learn, but I'm here to learn. Absolutely. And grow. And [00:30:00] grow. And sometimes that growth happens as a result of doing your best here and of course, yes, you know, that growth is, I've had to, I had a long talk with Suzanne about incorporating kind talk to myself, better time management, um, being present at home when I'm at home because instead of being, I've got to do homework when I'm at home.

And being at school and going, Oh my God, my kids are, you know, I have no idea what's happening, you know, and so being present and all of those things have come, have come, they've come with support. And so that's another thing that I would say is just be kind and just trust the process and it's, and be grateful.

So you were referring to, or I just want to give a Quick plug to our online and adult learning specialist Suzanne Bentley. We'll put her Information in our notes for the podcast. It's fantastic. Yeah. Yeah We've got a [00:31:00] bang up crew here that does some great work. Lifesavers. And we don't have all the answers.

Nope. We'll figure them out. We'll find them out. We're hard headed. At least you know what the questions are. And a lot of us come in and we're like, I don't even know what to ask, you know, and then, oh, bless your heart, come here, sit down, and that's what I needed. Yeah. I'm grateful. Well, thank you, Robyn.

Thank you so much. This was fun. Thank you so much for asking me. It was great. And we're out.