



## How to love and let go

Guest: Rachel Brathen

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### **[00:00:08] Meagen Gibson**

Welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Trauma Super Conference. Today I'm speaking with Rachel Brathen, a Swedish native, *New York Times* bestselling author and international yoga teacher.

Rachel's expertise on the subject of trauma comes through lived experience and practice. In March of 2014, Rachel collapsed in an airport, brought to her knees by excruciating stomach pains that would require surgery. When she woke up, her then boyfriend had to tell her that her best friend, Andrea, sustained fatal injuries as a result of a car accident.

In the 3 years following Andrea's death, Rachel had a lot to celebrate, a marriage to the man she loves and a blossoming career that took her all over the world, but unresolved grief and trauma for her childhood made the weight of her sadness unbearable. At each turn she was confronted again and again with the choice of would you lose it all, succumb to grief and grasp for control for what's beyond her reach or would you move through that loss and let go. Rachel Brathen, thank you for joining me today.

### **Rachel Brathen**

Thank you so much for having me.

### **Meagen Gibson**

So, Rachel, I want to talk to you because we have 75 experts on trauma speaking at this conference, and I know that the work that you do as a yoga teacher and a facilitator certainly gives people healing experiences and helps them become those agents in their lives, but it feels like your expertise around trauma comes from having to be the agent of changing your own life and seek out healing in order to survive. So I'd love it if you could start by describing to me when you became aware what trauma was and how it was impacting your life in ways that were holding you back from joy.

### **Rachel Brathen**

Yeah, it's funny, I get invited to these kinds of conferences once in a while, but I am not a psychologist. I am not a trauma expert in any way other than having lived through it. And I think my strength in a way is being vulnerable enough to really talk about it and write about it and share about it. And I somehow found this way to combine yoga and movement and breath with that storytelling and that's

to me, what's been really healing for me and also what I share with my community and people in the world.

**[00:02:19]**

But yes, I know everyone has gone through some sort of trauma in their life, so it's such a big thing to hone in on in terms of this was traumatic, and this was a big trauma in my life. Because I find that life keeps giving you things and it's more about how prepared we are and then how many tools we have to actually manage what is coming our way.

And I think for me growing up, I didn't have any tools whatsoever. And I also didn't have any family members with tools or people in my life or community that had any clue what to do, and really hard things came our way. I had about 18 years, which I feel really blessed saying that now that I had this awakening when I was 18 and not now at 33 or later at 53 or something like that. But I had this big awakening when I was 18 years old, where I realized that I had spent my entire life completely frozen, basically. And I wasn't aware. I thought I was living life and having a good time. But actually I'd spent 18 years not once even contemplating how I actually felt or what I actually needed. And that was a result of having lived through a lot of really traumatic things without ever having had the tools to deal with that.

### **Meagen Gibson**

And I know that you talk a little bit through that process in your book, *To Love and Let Go*, but what was that moment of realization at 18? How did you realize that you had been stuck or that you had been, I always talk about we look away from our feelings, we're doing anything we can do to put up blockades and to ignore our feelings and how exhausting that is and how much work we're doing to deny how we feel a lot of the time. So what were the several things that came together for you to help you realize, gosh, I'm doing a lot of work not to feel?

### **Rachel Brathen**

The work I was doing not to feel was really self destructive, and it was peaking. When I was 18 I was drinking every day, I was drinking myself into oblivion, not the fun casual college days or teenage drinking, but drinking to not want to be here kind of drinking. And smoking a pack of cigarettes a day and just stuffing my body with all kinds of junk to not have to actually be in my body or not have to feel what was there.

### **Rachel Brathen**

And cognitively I was aware that I'd had things happen in my past, like I had my parents divorced or separated in a really violent way with a lot of hard things that happened then, and then my stepdad passed away really suddenly in a car crash and my mom tried to commit suicide. She was depressed for most of my life. I moved something like 18 times before I was 18, I had maybe 9 different kinds of step or half siblings that kept shifting, it was just very chaotic.

And I would talk about that with people. It wasn't like I wasn't aware that I had had challenging things, but I would speak about it in a way of all the terrible things that happened to my mom. I was very enmeshed in this relationship that I had at the time with my mom, and I could be really heartbroken and really sad for all the things that had happened to her, and she had had such a hard life, but it never occurred to me that that was also my experience. I was so shut down or cut off from my actual feelings that I had compartmentalized everything and put it over there, like this person has had such a

hard life, how can I help them? Versus that also happened to me. I was there for that. How do I feel about that?

**[00:06:20]**

And it took going to a pretty hardcore healing retreat, I usually say it's a meditation retreat, but it's a trauma healing retreat with big focus on childhood through somatic healing and movement, life universe put me there. And I had this big awakening. It was like in the moment overnight awakening of what on earth have I been doing for 18 years? It wasn't this slow thing that I realized with time and maybe I should get therapy, or maybe I should figure this stuff out, it was really an overnight big brick in the head kind of awakening that I had.

**Meagen Gibson**

I have, I don't think envy is the right word, but I have a smidge of jealousy around the fact that that somatic component of it was there for you from the beginning at 18. I mean, the ways that that has shaped your adult life and how everything you've done and the choices you've made by having that somatic component to it must be remarkable.

**Rachel Brathen**

Yeah, absolutely. And I think even now it's getting very recognized and very acknowledged, but at the time, and still today, depending on where you go, this was a retreat based on the teachings of Osho. I don't know if you know Osho? The spiritual teacher who has a really bad reputation right now after these documentaries and things that came out. But there are some really, truly fantastic healing groups that came out of the psychologists that learned from him and then passed down now through many, many decades that still go on, and that really have this main focus on the somatic part of that healing.

And it involves a lot of wild and crazy movement and a lot of acting out the emotions that you weren't able to act out and process when you were little and using the body in different ways to actually let that stuck energy alchemize into something else. But it looks like a crazy place, like people screaming and punching things.

**Meagen Gibson**

If you're watching from the outside.

**Rachel Brathen**

Of course, it's wild and wild and totally crazy. And I felt coming out of that, who am I going to ever talk to about this? I could never explain, but I know now that if I would have ended up at some regular talk therapy I would not be sitting here today the way I am today. So I'm happy that it's seen as less crazy now and more actually completely, perfectly sane and normal.

**Meagen Gibson**

Necessary. And something that you said reminded me of just the ways in which we, and I think that that goes to, I'm not saying this clearly, but I've witnessed that discomfort in myself when I'm witnessing somebody else have a full body experience of whether it's grief or shock. I literally just in my mind had this visualization of you in agony in the airport and the way that other people would see

your pain and be uncomfortable with your expression of pain. And the ways that we do this in little micro moments every day throughout our lives, of being uncomfortable with other people's expressions of pain or suffering or even joy for that matter. Like people who celebrate too big or too loudly or too fully, that we're always compartmentalizing because we don't want to experience the discomfort that we have around other people's full expression of pleasure or pain. And how we're just trained to do that over our lifetime and relearning how to be in our bodies and be with our pain and be with our grief and be with our joy in the way that feels the truest to us is the work of a life.

### **[00:10:18] Rachel Brathen**

It is the work of a life. And it's, of course, such a teaching, every single one of those moments because at the end of the day it's just about us. And we think that, oh, here's this person suffering. I must do XYZ, or they probably need XYZ. Let me go fix that. Let me go talk to them. Let me go give advice. Let me solve this for the other person. When actually that just speaks so much about us and how we feel and what we need and our little triggers and reactions versus nothing about that person's experience at all.

And I think it's whenever I am in a trauma healing group, whether I'm facilitating one or assisting or in one participating, at times it can be this visceral, I can have a visceral, almost impossible to stop urge, of I have to pick this person up and save them. That I get so uncomfortable with their grief or their tears or their complete and utter agony, and it's like, I know I can help them. I know I can, just let me go in there and hold them or swoop them up or tell them the right thing. And it's like, oh, but what does that say about how I grew up and how quick I am to leave my own? What is my experience sitting in the circle? I'm feeling something, but all of that gets put over there so I can completely focus on the other person's experience.

I do that at some point every single day, leaving myself to step in and be with the other person because that was my big trauma growing up, and I think it is a lifetime thing. It's not going to one day just be fixed because I have all these tools, but more how much awareness can I bring in to my own body in those moments and just acknowledge that and notice that, oh, here we go again. I'm doing that thing again. I'm stepping away from me to go fix and save and be over here with them. But actually, what is a tool I can use right now just to bring myself back?

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. To circle back to something that you said earlier about all the things that happened to your mom, and you had never considered how you had been impacted by them. And I resonated with that so deeply and so fully, and especially the way that you talk about it in the book. Because I grew up with a mother who was chronically ill and had been orphaned. And so the dialogue through my entire childhood was that I wasn't an orphan so I had nothing to complain about. And that was never explicit but it was just like I was so fortunate. I was so lucky. I had two living parents. And yet I was impacted so incredibly deeply by the fact that my mother had been orphaned and by the fact that she was chronically ill my entire life and is still chronically ill.

One of the reasons that I wanted to talk to you as well is just around, I know you have a daughter and I have kids as well, and around what motherhood does to you, and parenthood, regardless of how it comes, what your gender is, the way that it puts all that into focus and makes it, and I'm speaking for myself but tell me if this resonates for you, how it puts this urgency on how important it is for you to evaluate the legacy that you want to continue and how important it is for you to repair the relationships within yourself, the relationships with your parents so what you don't want to continue does not continue. So that you can change patterns so that you can change legacy.

**[00:14:04] Rachel Brathen**

I think you touched on a lot of really true things there. I think the past generations, or past generations overall, it was tough. I mean, we're all having a tough go right now. I'm not saying life, it's all of a sudden 2021, super fantastic and easy. But this general idea, ok, we're not starving. My mom used to tell me, well, as long as no one's dying, everything is good. And I remember her having that awakening....

**Meagen Gibson**

That's the level for suffering.

**Rachel Brathen**

That's it. That's the bar. As long as I'm not orphaned, as long as no one is dying, as long as there's no war, starving. It's like the bar was set just so low for what it meant to have a good life. And I think it's our generation's path to awaken to the fact that that is not, let's raise that bar. We are allowed to not just be okay when no one is dying or no one is being orphaned, but actually, we are all really worthy of a beautiful life where we feel joy and happiness and safety and that we can reach for bigger things.

And I think about that a lot in terms of what's coming next with my own daughter and kids now. Because I feel like, I don't know if it's just this community and because I spend a lot of time talking to similar people who are raising their children in similar ways, or if it is this worldwide, I hope it is this worldwide awakening in that sense that we are raising our children with a higher bar and a little bit more, or a lot more awareness, around what it means to actually take care of ourselves and to be happy and also to allow ourselves to be not happy when it's like that.

And I'm always reminded, I have a 4 year old who, of course, she's 4 and she's a Pisces, she feels all the feelings all the time, and they're so big, and they fluctuate. The way children can just jump from agony to joy to gratitude, to rage, to peace. It's so palpable, so intense in a child. And I'm always reminded of the fact that I can only hold someone else in the depth of emotion that I can hold myself. So if I'm not practicing being there with me in my own agony and my own depression and my own grief and my own rage, if my rage scares me and I can't go there, then of course her rage is going to be this terrifying thing that I cannot allow.

And I say this without any kind of judgment whatsoever, but any parent who is, who doesn't tolerate anger, who cannot allow children to have those big, whatever we call them, tantrums or emotional displays in public, who are really quick to put the lid on and, 'don't yell', 'don't cry' because, of course, that is also a trauma response. I'm scared of my own anger, or I've never felt safe enough to meet the anger that resides in me, so how on earth would I be able to parent a little child in a rage in a really angry moment?

So anytime I feel triggered by my daughter, which of course happens, that it gets really overwhelming or really, really hard, it is a really good practice just to remind yourself that okay, well, apparently this is my limit within me. How much time have I spent in that practice feeling inside of me? Because that's where I have to go to be able to hold her and hers, and just validating that. It's also such a beautiful part of parenthood, I feel, how we can reparent ourselves by parenting our kids with more awareness and with more validation and acknowledgement of feeling, because probably most of us really lacked that. And in a way, when we're giving that to our kids now, we're also giving it to our own inner child in a way, at least that's what I think.

### **[00:18:01] Meagen Gibson**

And that attunement, because attuning first to ourselves and then to the people that we're in the care of. Because I know I made the mistake of, when I was a younger parent, both my two younger children and I myself was younger, thinking that there was a way for me to protect my children ultimately. I could protect them from suffering and pain and from ever having to endure any type of trauma if I was just vigilant enough. And I have since been shown and since learned that that's completely out of my control. And that all, well, for the most part, out of my control, and all I can do is make sure that we're attuned and connected so that I can weather the storm when it meets them, because it will.

### **Rachel Brathen**

It will, and without those, in a way it's a genius thing the universe has provided for us, making sure that when our kids are little and they're still in those formative years, that we are provided with things that are really challenging so that they can meet those kinds of feelings with some sort of support. And if we didn't have hard things happen and all we got to experience all day was rainbows and butterflies, then how on earth are they going to go out into this world and ever deal with the really hard things when they come?

So I think life gives us challenging stuff that we never expected, and we want to cushion our kids from everything just so that we actually get to give them that opportunity of feeling those hard things when we are there, because there's going to be moments when we're not. And it's also this, I don't know, sometimes it's good to remind ourselves that feeling our feelings is actually a safe thing. Just because it wasn't safe for me, just because for me I was scared to cry because I wasn't allowed to cry, that kind of thing. Or no one was ever allowed to raise their voice because being angry was a really shameful thing. Just because I had that experience does not mean that that is her experience at all. Actually, likely, it's not going to be that way.

So how can I just hold a more neutral space and trust that she's going to go through this process in a way that her intelligence knows what to do? I don't have to be there and cushion every moment. She knows how to be with her anger. I'm still working on that but in a way, she's more intelligent than me because she hasn't had all those things shutting her down yet, and hopefully that won't have to happen in the same way that it did to me. Or maybe it will and that's what we get but we can only do what we're doing now.

### **Meagen Gibson**

Yeah. And I don't know if this is your experience, but I mean, when you were talking about when your daughter triggers you, I have two sons and it's not when, it's how many times a day. And I was talking with another contributor who was doing some breathwork with us, and I was talking about how the reactivity for me, I'm literally bargaining for seconds in my own process. This is not that I am some peaceful, calm, it is 3 seconds take an eternity for me to experience. That is my negotiation. Can I sit with my discomfort of what is happening for 3 seconds?

And it feels like days, those seconds, sometimes when you're doing that work. We have this picture of what it looks like to be doing your work in the face of that trigger, and that's what it looks like to me. If you could do an entire documentary on those 3 seconds, I could fill it. What's happening in my interior? Just like the agony and what's happening in my body and the rapid way that I'm checking in with myself and my thoughts and questioning my assumptions.

**[00:22:13]**

And then, as you said, 30 seconds later, my very super explosive child is happy again. He's like, you're still there. What are you still doing there? We're way past that now. Now I've written a song about the flavor of cotton candy grapes and you're still upset. How are you still there, lady? So how many times a day do I do that? I'm literally negotiating for seconds in the expansion of that tolerance. I don't know if you can relate to that. No, you need help.

**Rachel Brathen**

No, you need help. This is terrible. No, but we are going to get, our children are going to trigger us the way no one else possibly could on earth. They're going to have exactly that, they're designed with the buttons that trigger us the most because that's what we need. It really, truly is.

And I think in a way, it's also really important that we, also doing this work, that we don't put this version of us that knows so much and is so evolved all the way there on a pedestal of like, the bar gets too high. I'm not allowed to fail at my ability to give my children grace and kindness and space at every moment of every day, because we are going to fail at that all the time. We're going to have really hard days. And we're going to have terrible things that come our way when we just can't. When those 3 seconds are half a second. Sometimes we have 10, and sometimes we have none. And it's like, how can I, in those moments, instead of beating myself up or tell myself the story of how I failed or I'm not enough or I yelled at my kid, I'm the worst mom ever. It's just that I'm a human being.

And I try to practice that with my daughter, when I have an overflow and I lose it. Yesterday it was bedtime and she decides she's going to make a magic potion of some sort with flour and milk and nutritional yeast and some food coloring. She's making something, and she starts putting everything out and I say, 'no, we don't have time. It's bedtime. So we're not doing this'. She ignores me, takes the bowl, takes all her stuff. I said, 'I said it's bedtime. We're not doing this'. Puts it next to my computer, and I just get the chance to say, 'don't put...' and then she pours an entire jug of milk all over my keyboard. And of course, I'd already had kind of a challenging day, and it's like...

**Meagen Gibson**

I'm not laughing.

**Rachel Brathen**

It's funny. But I'm upset about the computer, and I'm really angry. I'm not angry at her. There's nothing wrong with her being. But at that moment, it's like I'm cursing and I cannot, you know. And then there's a moment there where I see her face like, whoa, there's that big moment of, mom lost it. That is not how I normally would react when something happens. And the best thing. I mean, the only thing in those moments is that I go back and I repair. It's the only thing I can do. When that moment is over, I take a breath that I go straight to her and hold her and let her know that you are not in charge of Mommy's feelings. Mommy's working on managing her feelings. I got really angry now, but that was not your fault. I'm working on my own feelings. And just hold her and we don't have to talk about the computer and the milk, that was already a big moment. We can just create a sense....

**Meagen Gibson**

She got the message about the computer and the milk.

**[00:25:45] Rachel Brathen**

She got the message for sure.

But when I repair, I know because I do that often, even small moments, big moments going back, where she sees that I'm snapping at my husband, I can go back and repair that after also. I'm modeling for her how to be a human being that makes mistakes and shows up after that and doesn't let that linger and become resentment. But that apologizes when we mess up and goes back. And I see that in her. She's naturally really good at it. I don't have to tell her just to apologize, but something happens and then a few hours later, 10 times out of 10 she comes back and she says, 'hey, I'm sorry I did that'. She knows how to prepare. It's not a hard skill to teach. I think kids naturally know that that feels good. It's hard to say sorry or it's hard to come back with kindness when we've been angry but it feels so good when it's done. So we have to allow ourselves to mess up otherwise parenting is not going to be manageable. It's too much.

**Meagen Gibson**

Exactly. And that is the magic, too. So many times our kids are, and especially at the age your daughter is at, we're trying to manage behaviors instead of looking at the objective behind the behavior. Which of her last night, I imagine, was connection. I want to do something. I know my intention is to avoid what you want me to do, but still connect with you.

**Rachel Brathen**

I think she wanted to give me something. She wanted to make a potion to give me for bed because she knows I make these little bedtime things. She had a loving intention, and that was more important than that time in that moment.

**Meagen Gibson**

Definitely more important than brushing your teeth. I mean, way more important.

And so when you move through that. And about a year ago, I had a moment where I realized that instead of talking to my kids about all the things that you just said, I was going to have to just do it myself and that they were going to pick up on it. And they did. And they have. And it's remarkable. And I wish I had done it when they were 4 instead of now but we all get there in our own time.

I want to talk to you about movement. And one of the things that I really related to again in the book was how much you, not only move physically, obviously because of yoga, but also you have geographically moved a lot. And we were talking before we started recording, that I have as well, all over the country, just in one continent. But this idea of, and I had found this out probably 10 or 15 years ago about myself. I noticed, hey, when things get really tough, I just pack whatever I can into a small car and I leave. I just light a proverbial match, metaphorically, and just like poof. And that only works for so long. And wherever you go, there you are.

And so it was about 7 years ago now I was confronted with a point where I was very much confronted with my trauma and did not have the option, by choice or by desire, to leave. I have a family, I love this family but every fiber in my being was saying, go, you've got to go right now. This is a matter of life and death. Get the heck out of here. And so it was a real turning point for me of not having the ability to move, and I'm just talking geographically, removed from my options, my coping capabilities, and forced me to do other things and to confront it in other ways.



**[00:29:31]**

And so that's a long winded way of metaphorically getting to this concept of movement. I know you've moved geographically a lot. I know movement is such a huge part of who you are as a person. So I'm wondering if there's been a moment where you could talk about being forced to move and also not having the option to move? Or if you've ever suffered an injury and you weren't able to physically move, how that's impacted your capability to cope? What that brings up for you as far as triggers and things within yourself of how you're dealing with things.

**Rachel Brathen**

Yeah, that's a really good question. I think it's easy to look at our past responses, the trauma responses that we have from little, and look at them as like, oh, that was so bad. I shouldn't have done that. That was this pattern that was not good for me, whether it's escaping through, how I was doing it through drinking or drama, those are my two big ones, or if it's picking up your stuff and moving. But it's, I think, really important that we hold the genius of that and the intelligence of that response with so much love. I'm sure there were so many moments when you were younger, where that ability to pick up and go, where it saved your life.

**Meagen Gibson**

All of those were good choices, and some of them literally did save my life. Absolutely.

**Rachel Brathen**

And it's good to know for every person listening, too, that whatever that response is that we label as bad and it's not serving us anymore, we should stop, that at some point probably it saved our lives and we should be really thankful that we have or had the ability to respond in that way, to not stay in something that was super harmful. Or in my case, to have a place to go when my pain became so overwhelming that I couldn't sit with myself. It's like, very smart. It's not great to be drunk every day, but at that time it was the only way I knew how to cope.

And then it turned into other things. Just inability to be present, being fidgety, drinking became, working became getting really successful, being really busy all the time, fixing things all the time. It's the same. It's the same escape in a sense, just one is labeled worse because it wreaks more havoc on your life, I think at the moment, but essentially it's the same kind of response, which is to check out in some shape or form.

And if I didn't have the ability to do that, if my body hadn't figured out ways for me to check out, I would have been overwhelmed to the point of not managing to stay alive, I think. So just to hold that version of ourselves with kindness and with love, and that at some point this was really helpful that I had this response.

And then we awakened to, ok, that was helpful then, it's not working for me now. For me it's like being a workaholic as a yoga teacher is not working for me. It is not working for me to run this race against, I don't know what it is, it's not serving my health, it's not serving my family, this constant busyness, this checking out, going over there instead of being here, or picking up all my stuff and moving across the country, it's not serving me anymore or working anymore now.

And with just the awareness of here is how it's helped me, in a sense here is how it soothed me, here are the things that I gained from that, we're ultimately looking to soothe ourselves in the same way.

But now maybe we have different tools or we have the ability to sit with that hard feeling for a little bit longer than we could 10 years ago or last year or whenever that time of our lives were. And I think just in terms of movement, whether it's leaving a relationship or moving across the world or geographic movement in the sense that we have the ability to get up and go, it's really hard to heal in the dynamic that we were harmed. Whether that's the geographical energy of a place that reminds us of everything that came our way, or whether it's people that were involved in that scenario. That's really, really hard.

**[00:33:41]**

And I think moving geographically can be super helpful just to have that fresh energy of there's a new opportunity here, I can drop into a new version of myself here or create something new, but we also have to feel safe enough to do that. And that's when those tools, which for me, was meditation, it was yoga, it was eating in a different way, it was shaking, different kinds of trauma techniques that really were helpful for me to have that steadiness in myself so that when life got more unpredictable, because I had to pick up my stuff and go, I could manage that then. None of that answers your question well.

**Meagen Gibson**

No, absolutely. I really appreciate the context of sometimes you can't heal where you're harmed. I felt that in my heart. And I love that you really put that into the framework of let's have some gratitude and grace for our past selves that make these choices, because it really is divine work that we just find a way. And I definitely don't have any, as far as me, I don't have any judgment toward that stuff that did that over and over again. It was just a matter of noticing that that was not a choice I wanted to make anymore. And then being like, okay, now what?

**Rachel Brathen**

Well, I do that. I judge that part, or inside of myself I can sense it's like, oh, now you're over committed again. Now you're stressing out again. Now your days are so... Why do you do this to yourself? You know better. You're more involved. And it's like that is not a kind approach. That's not a kind way for me to speak to myself, instead of okay, there's something going on right now that's taking your nervous system on this ride over there. And when I judge myself in those moments, that I should be just meditating more, I should be doing something different, but it's not my response. Then it's like I make that pressure worse. I make it harder on myself.

**Meagen Gibson**

Sorry to interrupt. Anybody who has done any personal work and has had access to all of these tools and all of this knowledge, has had one of those moments where, and mine came recently, where you're like, I have all of the knowledge and all of the tools available and yet this feels really tough. The delusion that at some point we're going to have enough knowledge or we're going to have enough practice, we're going to have enough experience that we will be able to avoid difficult feelings or difficult circumstances, or we will be able to avoid having our nervous systems hijacked by difficult situations. And it's not the case. I can't sell anybody solutions anymore. I can only sell them processes, or not even sell them, but you know what I mean, I'm metaphorically speaking, just like there is no easy fix. Life keeps coming.

**[00:36:47] Rachel Brathen**

Life keeps coming, yeah. But it's good to, at least for me, it's helpful to remind myself in those moments that the thing that needs "fixing", quote, unquote, the thing that I actually need to be doing isn't the long list of things my mind tells me I should be fixing to feel better. If I lost some more weight I would feel great, if I had a better job, if I was in a more exciting relationship, if I had a bigger house, if I organized my office, if it was cleaner around here, it's like a million things your mind will tell you, then you will feel better. When actually what our nervous system needs is to be addressed, a place to ground, a place to steady ourselves a little bit in the body.

And that generally doesn't happen through the fixing of the problem. But through addressing the sense of feeling unsafe or that sense of discord that we're experiencing on the inside. And it's such a cliché, of course, but it's like to look within and look within and look within and look within. And that's where the answer to all of those challenges that are going to keep coming, that's where they are always going to be. And that's comforting and also annoying.

**Meagen Gibson**

It is. Exactly, comforting and annoying. That's exactly it. There's not more to do, there's much less to do. It's to stop trying, actually, for a minute, and be with whatever it is that's happening.

**Rachel Brathen**

Exactly.

**Meagen Gibson**

And for people like you and me, that's the last thing we want to do. No, clearly there's something else I can do. There must be more I can do.

**Rachel Brathen**

Also to go back to movement, that sometimes the way to settle the nervous system is through movement, and sometimes the way to settle the nervous system is the opposite way and movement just triggers us more. So it's more about, I think, really getting to know our bodies and really getting to know ourselves and our responses and just the ability to place our hands to our hearts and close our eyes and ask, 'what do I need?'. And the ability to create a little bit of space just to listen to what that answer actually is. I mean, that is the most valuable thing you can ever learn.

**Meagen Gibson**

Yeah, I keep saying seconds and millimeters when it comes to space. I've had to scale down my expectations of space. And then I always meet those expectations because who can't find some seconds and some millimeters?

Rachel, I'm cognizant of the time, I want to say thank you for being with us. And also, where can people find out more about you and all the work that you do and all of the companies that you lead?

**Rachel Brathen**

How sweet. I have a podcast, it's called *The Yoga Girl Podcast*. That's available where all podcasts are.

And I teach yoga and meditation on [yogagirl.com](http://yogagirl.com). That's where I live in the online space.

**[00:39:55] Meagen Gibson**

Well, thank you again for being with me. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

**Rachel Brathen**

Thank you so much. Thanks for having me.