

SUBSCRIPTION ENTREPRENEUR



HOSTED BY ERIC TURNNESSEN, FOUNDER OF [membermouse™](#)

How Rui Liu Turned Her Love Of Tea Into A Thriving Online Business

"One day, we were doing a shoot for a very long time – 20 hours or so. And in my bag, I had two sachets of green tea. I just put them in, and then I put in water and the tea just started popping up and down, doing pirouette. Then you start to smell it. This one guy popped in his head and asked, 'What's that? It smells really good.' And then everybody gathered around the table and started asking questions like, 'What is this?'"

INTRO:

You're listening to Rui Liu, my very special guest on today's episode of The Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

Rui is the founder of an amazing business called Grass People Tree. It's a unique combination of eCommerce and online education where she provides access to rare, artisan teas and education about tea culture.

In our conversation today, Rui shares the story of growing up in a remote region of China, moving to London, and rediscovering the significance of tea as an adult.

Plus, you'll hear how returning to her roots awakened her desire to share the wonders of tea with the world.

Rui and I have a free-flowing and down-to-earth discussion that I sincerely hope you enjoy.

As always, I'm your host Eric Turnnessen. And this is Episode 171 of The Subscription Entrepreneur Podcast.

Eric: We're all good. What are you drinking?

Rui: I'm having a Master's Red just from today. I'm still sipping it. travel-

Eric: Grandpa style? I'm not having any tea today. I'm doing a liver cleanse right now, so I'm-

Rui: Okay, what does that mean?

Eric: There's some protocols, a specific diet. But basically, removing caffeine for the time.

Rui: Okay, and also not to get angry.

Eric: Yeah, don't get angry, generally-

Rui: How I've been?

Eric: How have I been?

Rui: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eric: Good, I mean good, like it's obviously fluctuates. But overall, nothing major. I've been alive, living.

Rui: A lot to feel grateful for I think.

Eric: Yeah, for sure.

Rui: Feeling the...

Eric: You as well, you've been traveling.

Rui: Yeah, today was actually really nice to have the last leg of... Today we drove seven hours, that was the easiest bit of travel in South Africa. I've been around in a lot of many remote places, from top to bottom in the last four weeks or so. I shared a lot of tea wherever I go, and one of the special ones really great was, I get to share tea with the kids from the Xhosa tribe in the wild coast. They haven't even seen an iPhone before, so my phone they were just screaming and when I shared tea with them, their expression when they drink tea is just so physical. They would get up and dance or run around and jump up and down.

One of the kids would just sip tea and said nothing, just cup after cup. It's really special, and they had no reference at all. I can see that I'm probably the first Asian face to ever pop into that village. It was really special and every day I think about... it's just the melodies still in my head, the song they sing when we leaving and it was so special and definitely big like those to make you feel you're alive with them. It's just like it felt like their joy is limitless. It's very beautiful to learn this part of the world and their culture and, and I was saying to them you fellas I've returned, because it felt like home vibe.

The people are very friendly and we have a lady who comes deal with the house stuff and she would just cook in the kitchen for her family. There's no boundaries between mine or yours, and it's very much like Guizhou, so I really felt like a returned instead of going to a new place. Just the people, and it's so beautiful. It's been very special, South Africa and so it's a very good land.

Eric: What was the reason that you went there?

Rui: I just felt like I need to turn a new page again, of two years have being static. I felt like, I just need to flow again somewhere, without really a very fixed destination. South Africa, because I have a lot of friends here that I wanted to connect more face to face, and I've also

been very fascinated by the cultures here. It's such a mishmash of everything, cultures, race, languages and the landscape. I felt like I would have a soft landing here. Somehow, I just knew the landscape will hold me like home, that's why I came. I don't really have a specific reason, I just thought South Africa and here come.

Eric: Yeah, perfect. At this point, I'm just going to kind of say something to the audience, just to kind of bring him into this. We kind of jumped into this, I'm talking with Rui and at this point on our podcast, we've interviewed many entrepreneurs, authors and experts. And yet, Rui is definitely one of the most interesting people we've had on the show. Based on a little bit I know about her, her life has been a journey in every sense of the word, and I know in this episode, we're going to dive deep into your background and story. We've had a little bit of a glimpse in that preamble, where you were talking about your recent trip to South Africa, and your relationship with tea a little bit. Can we get into the... how did you arrive at tea and things in the first place? What was the first part of your life like up until tea?

Rui: How did I arrived? I think the answer would actually be how tea arrived in my life. I think if we all fast forward all the way back, it was probably when I was four or five, hanging out in the tea house and my parents... It's sort of like preschool, kindergarten, they just put you there. You play with other kids, and you learn from the kids, from the adults and sort of just immersed into a culture that is very like phone room, but a phone room shared with everybody. That's how he arrived in my life, I guess. It was through my parents, so the people who are there hang out in the tea house. It was the same tea house when my parents were hanging out in the '70s, in the '80s, when it was a slightly different vibe that where it was really hip and luxurious place to be.

You were there to be seen, you were there to socialize and also talk about important things. In fact, I think my parents become close at the tea house. This was very recent, sorry my mom only told me a few days ago. I remember one day bringing back the packaging from the tea house, my dad saw the packaging. He was like, "Oh, I know this tea house." I said, "Yeah, I've been sharing their tea in the UK." Then my dad told me the stories, how they used to hang out. I guess that's how tea started in my life.

Eric: What kind of kid were you when you first had tea? Were you the one jumping around and dancing, or are you in one sipping cup after cup silently?

Rui: I was very quiet when I was a kid, very introverted and I definitely not the one dance around. I'm more of that kind of kid now, but I wasn't back then. I was very quiet. Then fast forward, I think it's something that you grow up with, it's so ingrained within you. You don't think about it, you don't think about how special it is, unless one day you live in an environment that doesn't have that anymore and your whole world almost feels like upside down, inside out. Then you're really misaligned with who you are, because I guess that community isn't there anymore, that warm sensation of a blanket by the fire isn't there anymore.

Everything that you share in life, that sort of support network isn't there and the day to day popping in and out of the tea house isn't anymore. Then you start to wonder why, so my journey of wandering it was through actually probably about five to ten years, I was slowly working that out. When I was working that out, it was actually pretty hard because I worked in fashion industry from when I was 15, more or less till I was 24 or 25. That was a big chunk of my life, that I was traveling around the world without the tea house, without tea. I was drinking a lot of coffee then, because it needed that to get you through things and a lot of sugar and all of this I do.

I think those 10 years struggle, the big question mark made me realize what was missing. I found that missing part when one day, we were doing a shoot for a very long time, 20 hours or so. There's a lot of mass bars like chocolate bars and coffee drank, techno music going on the background. Everyone is just trying to bash out the last hour of work and we just couldn't, we're so stuck. I clean the coffee pot, it was a glass coffee pot, I cleaned it, it still had that smell out of coffee and in my bag, I had two sachets of green tea. I just put them in, and then I put in water and the tea just started popping up and down, doing pirouette. Then you start to smell it.

Even people walking past the studio, this one guy popped in his head and asked what's that? It smells really good. We ended up inviting him in. Somebody invited them to have tea, and the whole studio... the music got shut down. They turned off the music, and then everybody gathered around the table and started asking questions like, what is this? Is it green tea? Where does it come from? All from my home Guizhou. Where is Guizhou? Then we googled Guizhou, and everyone just like what? We never knew you your home can be so avatar like, it's just mad. Then people started asking more and more question.

That was a long time, nobody in the industry would ever really look inside who you are, even by asking you where you come from. It was, when I was doing modeling work it was every day you go to 30 to 40 castings during those intensive fashion weeks. Then people will look at you, sometimes I remember in Paris. It was really harsh. They look at you in the corridor, they can just tell you, I hate you, you can go now and so... It was a big contrast for me that day, and I think something got reborn or enlivened that day. We had the tea, and particularly the photography team was really taken by it, because they obviously apparently turned out to be one of them was a tea nut.

Then he made a lot of people, and then it became a social gathering every Thursday. Because in London a culture is every Thursday, everyone goes out partying. It was the biggest party night on Thursday. But instead of going and drinking alcohol, we would sit around and just sip tea. Now we're down for six months, until I ran out of tea to give and people started asking how to buy it. One of them said, maybe that could be your exit road to get out of the fashion industry and to do something different. There I just thought about it, but then of course, I was also educated in a West partly. In my head was brainwashed in a way, because my parents always tell me, or my people always tell me that the tea is very clean, is wild and you can find it.

It's very special even in China. Of course, me being very influenced by Western way of thinking, it's like, "No, I don't believe or you saying. I have to go back to check it out myself." I come back home, and what was planned for I think two and a half months turned out to be two and a half years on and off of exploring the cultures of tea and also the cultures around the people who made the tea and the land scape. Then I think, then I learned to look at home from a very different perspective. It almost becomes a treasure, a gem for me. I realize the richness and the diversity of tea cultures back home, even just within now one province.

I went to more than 280 villages, took a lot of notes, took a lot of examples, learned a lot of stories, hang out with a lot of people. I realize, "Wow, this is so special, where I come from." Now understanding who I am from that point of view was, it was really one of those very profound experiences in my life I think Going home again. Yeah, that was the beginning before Grass People Tree, really. It was that research, but it was really... Research was a process for me to reconnect with where I was born and grew up, and also the process of figuring out the meanings of all this. That's how he arrived really, it was in my mid 20s. It really arrived like, "I am here, you haven't noticed but I'm here."

Eric: It's a beautiful story. You and I met through tea. I've been drinking tea and very into it for five years now. It's interesting, because there's all these corollaries and in your story about being in the fashion world and how superficial it is, in the real sense of the word surface level, they can look at you and be like, "You're not the right product. Forget you're human, you're not the right product for my situation." In the beginning, tea can be very surface level. You can go all different kinds of ways with tea. You can use it as a superficial thing, like this is a product and people can package it and et cetera, and you can consume it and it's good.

Tea definitely has a spirit of its own for sure. Something I've learned though is, it's kind of like a teaching from any teacher. Teaching in itself has a value, but unless it's interpreted and delivered correctly by someone who has the connection to the lineage or the culture, it doesn't have the same power to it. I feel through my experience and what I connect with and what you're talking about in your journey is that, tea is an ally, it's a friend, it's supportive. But it's supportive for us humans to remember community, remember culture, because these things are so dramatically missing in our world these days, we've lost a lot of that.

Rui: Yeah, tea is to remember culture and community, I like that.

Eric: What helps facilitate it? Like you having that experience, where you just plopped in the green tea, and everybody is all crazy on coffee and sugar and whatever, being sleep deprived, and it literally transformed the environment. But I would say, the tea alone couldn't have done that. The fact that you were the one doing it was part of it, because you had the connection to the culture. The tea, when at that moment spoke to you, awakened something within you, and that in part is what generated that vibe. If anybody else had done it, I would ventured to say that the same thing would not have happened.

Rui: It always goes back to the writing of tea. You have to write grass and people and tree, people are always involved. But I also think the people who are involved had... There's a necessity for you to be intentional with the plant, whether it's about sharing, or picking, or making or preparing. I think everything is asking you to pay attention, to clarify our intention with this plant. Then the tea can become a tea from a plant. Particularly in the making, I think also the growing, everything you have to have that intent to be in tune with nature. Then when you share it, you need to be in tune with yourself and also the environment around you and the people. I think that's what nature intends us to do and to be, because we're part of nature as well, you just can't go against that. It's just illogical.

Eric: Right. When you do go against nature, we are living at this time... What happens when you're out of balance with nature? A lot of the challenges that are kind of main trending points on everybody's mind globally in a lot of ways can be connected back to disconnection from nature.

Rui: Absolutely, or whatever that is going on, whatever is the trendy hashtag, the crisis we're facing, I think everything you can almost trace everything back to the essence of it. We tend to forget that we're part of nature, and we're really not there on the top. We're with nature, how is it possible for us to even think that we have the power to decide for all species, everything? How is it possible for us to even assume that we know everything there is. Even just a plant, and we refer the plant to it, everything is a it. We named the plant with a name, and that's how we started. But I think, there's just so much profound wisdom and knowledge within nature and the balance of everything.

I think our intention... the essence of that is going back to our intention, look at how we disconnect from nature, or how we can reconnect with nature. I think that goes back to internal work. I think a lot of world crisis can be resolved by us really even every day not talking for 30 minutes, not bothering anybody for 30 minutes, just sit with ourselves. I think it would actually be a better place already, not doing. Yeah, so I think-

Eric: And tea facilitates that?

Rui: Absolutely, I think tea facilitates that. But I think anything that grounds you back to that connection, it could be a tea, it could be anything, calligraphy or breathing by a tree. But I think the intention has to be there. You not doing nothing for doing for the sake of doing something, you just be. But I think we'll find it very challenging to just be, I think that's the problem that we have. Even if I can extend this a little bit, I think even when something happens, we always wanted to go out and help and do something. It almost feels like we're only valid through doing, and I think a lot of teachings from nature is I think it's about just being and knowing that you're connected. I simply if you just put yourself in the landscape, just stay there for half an hour, you really understand that and it's a very important nonverbal teaching just even from a tree or a forest.

Eric: Yeah. It's critical to have those experiences and 100% I agree with you. That having some daily aspect where there is a practice of just being, even to say a practice of being is a little bit confusing and it certainly is challenge for us all at times. Because naturally the first question would be, you say, "Okay, how do I be?" It was like, "Well, how do I do that?" Right?

Rui: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eric: That's usually the first question. But that's the trick of it, there's a paradox there.

Rui: I think it's realizing how our mind works, right? It's we're distracted by thoughts, that's it and that's why we were put in filters in front of us to not know what it means to just be, because I think we're constantly driven by the thoughts. Everything we do are the thoughts. Then I think that the ultimate being isn't about the thoughts, isn't about what we think or not think. I think there's a deeper level of that, the being is really not about what happens in our head, but it's about what happens in our belly, in our heart, the very fibers of us. I think, I would probably say the first step is to learn how to be less distracted, a bit more focused and I think goes back tea.

I think tea helps you do that, without you knowing to a lot of levels. Even just hearing the kettle being boiled, making the tea, it doesn't have to be always ceremonial. But I think taking time to do that will create that gap from new thinking to you thinking less or not thinking at all. You have to know that to go into it, to be intentional when you do it. Okay, I'm going to see now. This is my moment, and this is me to slow down mode. Whatever that means, whatever the intention is and you go into that and you do it. Otherwise you just become another thoughts driven action again.

Eric: Right. There's really no way to do it wrong, because the fact of the matter is, when you start intentionally going after practice like that, it's always going to be thought driven because there is no separation between thought and whatever else you might be at that point. You believe I am my thoughts. There is no concept of speaking of them as a separate. I know for me when I started with tea, that's how I was in the beginning. A lot of my life, I've been very intellectual, very entrepreneurial, very musical and creative, so very much rich in the areas of accomplishment, doing, execution, these things which are all good things.

Then when tea came, I started sitting with it and pouring with myself. When I first started doing it, I was being very mental about it like, "Okay, I'm going to measure my leaf. I'm going to measure it, I will have a laser thermometer, measure the water. I'm going to do it right." Even that was not wrong, because ultimately through doing that consistently over time, my sensitivity naturally enhanced and as it enhanced, their trust came in. When trust came in, the mechanisms and the rightness and the wrongness due to some external standard of measurement disappeared. Then it was more of a conversation. When a conversation happens, there's listening.

All of this naturally unfolded, and it wasn't that I was... I view tea as a teacher in that sense, because it was not a plan. It was just, I think if you show up with something consistently with the intention to learn something, there's no wrong way to do it, and the path will develop itself. Ultimately, I didn't get into meditation until after tea kind of taught me things. Then naturally, I led to let it meditation naturally. My diet changed because I was more sensitive to selecting things consciously, just based on the experience of paying attention to something and sitting with it.

Rui: Absolutely, I really resonate with that because I remember the first six months or so when I learned it. Always of course, we learn things in the modern way when we learn in uni, when we went on, do our master and whatever. We have a very specific way of acquiring information. Like you said there's the right and wrong, and all the perceptions about learning. It almost you almost feel like it's so diehard, almost feels like an ingrained habit and this is how we learn. It's about getting information from somebody else that tells us this is the information, remember it and do it, and realize it. But when I was learning tea the first six months, I wasn't allowed to ask questions from anybody.

From what you just said earlier, I realized it was actually my teacher was saying to me, "Look at the first foremost, the most important teacher, the tea itself." Within six months, I was just given a lot of tea to drink and of course, being Chinese there's this advantage of I've already grow up drinking. How to brew isn't the question, but you still wanted to know, what is the right way to evaluate, because you feel like, "Oh, now I'm learning tea from the Tea Master. It's got to be something quite special." You're sort of waiting for that most important piece to show up almost. Someday you're just knocking about, and the tea master will say something, and then you have enlightenment or something that will be...

That was in my head. But I was just drinking it, and after six months, you sort of felt like you're in the dark a little bit. All my teachers were there to tell me you're in this space now. We're all standing on the sharp corners, so when you come close to almost wanted to hurt yourself, we're here to safeguard you. That level of safety and care was there provided by my teacher. I was able to just drink tea, use whatever I can grab, whatever tea there is and just experiment and just do it. After six months, somebody will give me a tea and I drink it and I will know, it doesn't taste right or it doesn't feel right.

Or they give me the tea to smell then I know, where they are from, where they grow. Whether it's from the inside of the mountain, the young side of the mountain, and you can sort of have an idea or picture. All of these things were just taught by the tea itself, by you experiencing it. But I guess the important thing is, you got to make a start, we all got to make a start. I think now going back to the living tea that we've been on together, I think now a lot of the reflection I have is really to help and nurture environment for people to explore it themselves and not to really impose any of my opinions, or other's opinions. But for them to experience it and form up the answers that are meaningful and unique to them. That's how I always facilitated, so I felt like that's such an important teaching from my teachers and I'm actually really grateful for that way of learning. You almost feel like you get deconstructed, and then put together again.

Eric: Oh yeah, have you heard this story? Because that's how I learned too. Before I started with talking about me brewing tea, but before doing that, I sat with my teacher for months, just drinking tea. I think part of that is, you're not... If you want to learn something... If you lead with the mind, I want to know how, you want to ask questions, it reminds me of that story about the scholar who visits a tea master and the tea master is... That scholar wants to know some... No it wasn't a tea master, it was some wise person and he wants to know the answer to some question. The tea master is pouring his cup and it overflows and the scholar says, "Oh, stop my cup is full." He says, "This is like your mind, you cannot learn anything if there's no space for something new to come."

It reminds me of that where, if you really want to learn something, informational things like business related things, maybe one thing. But even so I would argue, there is a lot of similarities in terms of how to approach business and other very logical subjects. I mean, there's life and everything if you're willing to look. I'd be interested to hear what your opinion is on that, because at some point, you began thinking about starting a tea company. When did that happen for you? Given how your personality had developed and who you had become, how did you approach that type of endeavor?

Rui: I think the beginning was just this really strong internal drive to want to share it. Then I think it was the motivation and... I don't know whether passion is the right word for it really. I don't know about the word for passion. But I think, it almost feels like an urge that I have to do it, I have to share it. That's how I got started, but then you... Then you figure out the how question. Then you internalize the why question, because that's how it's driven you to do these things. But then you have to externalize it. Externalizing by, let's say writing a copy for it. Become sort of, it's like I've done the literature review and now I have to write the review now.

I have to narrow it down, find the gap. That's how I got started. When I was on the trip, I saw... My home was really on the road of getting out of poverty level, by mass producing tea in the very big scale, so agriculture and tourism is a big strategy for elevating people from south west of China out of the economic situation they're in. I saw a lot of that happening, but at the same time I saw a lot of traditions and cultures been dimmed, I think. The light was dimming for them, and because I think the unique position for me, is because I've been around places. When I go back and see those things, they're very precious to me.

But for somebody who's been for generations or just in one spot and they had a really hard life for so many generations, they see it very differently. They want to do things in a different way. I sort of see the gap there, and I just wanted to... I felt like the wild indigenous and ancient trees and their culture are very special to me, and I wanted to share that. That's how it got narrowed down to Grass People Tree and what Grass People Tree is set out to do. I sort of had a rough idea, but within the notebooks that I had, it was so hard in the beginning. It wasn't like, we're looking for marketing stories to tell.

My challenge has always been there are too many stories, which one do I tell, and how do I tell it in a way for people who never experienced it to understand it in a certain level. Even just the initial website copywriting, it took me nine months to do the initial. Just present that website more or less, and nobody can do it for me, because it was my journey. It has been my journey all along, so I had to do it. I think the first year of the business was a lot of trying to figure out, then the middle of it, you realize I got to stop figuring it out now, I just got to do it. That was when I learned as, I guess entrepreneur is the word or a business owner or somebody just on this leading the initial project.

You have to learn a way just to do things on the get go, and it's never going to be perfect. But you have to make a start and I think is like you said in the beginning about the tea journey, it's the same teaching. Once you build the trust with yourself, next time when you go through it, you know you're more informed with the process, and you know you're going to freak out, and you know you're going to go to a dark place, and you know all the procedure. But you know you're always going to come out. The more you do it, the better you're at it, the more comfortable you are with it. Then I think by the point now, I think it's the fifth year now maybe. Yeah, the fifth year of Grass People Tree. Then you start to have some guy who can help you, those very special people, who are your think tank, your supporters, your teachers, your brain-

Eric: But ultimately those people only came because you put the green tea in the water.

Rui: Yeah, but...

Eric: You have to start the brew first, before people show up and be enthusiastic.

Rui: Yeah, I see it can... One day if I don't do tea, I will still share something. There's always something for me to share. I don't think I can ever stop that, it's just me. I think that somehow, that my intention aligns with that. Is for me to share part of me, whatever that is. Then all the actions start to fall into places, the plans, the so-called strategies or the languages, how you use to communicate, everything fall into places, then becomes easier. But of course, that has taken a few years for me to realize. I think the one of the most important learning for me is the word trust. trust just myself, and I think for anything that you set out to do, you've got to have that level of trust in you, for you to even go and lose yourself and to trust yourself you're going to come back at it and keep on going. I think that trust is very important, particularly I think for a woman, immigrant and foreigner, that started a company in a very different environment, on the subject that people have a very specific idea of. I think there's a lot of trust you have to give to yourself in order for you to be at ease, when they're sharing.

Eric: There's a lot of amazing lessons in there. Yeah, trust is a big one. I mean, a lot of the things that you're referencing are all... have been part of my journey, too. I think one thing that you talked about even your recent journey to South Africa, you just felt like you needed a reset, and that how one day, if tea is not the thing, then it's not going to be the thing. But there's a more fundamental aspect of your being, that's being expressed in different ways. For almost 10 years, it was in the fashion industry, and, ultimately and kind of like entertainment sense, if

your life was a movie, that would be the part of the life that we would maybe say, "Oh, these were negative things happening.

This was the challenge period, and the dark period, et cetera." But you can also see from the hindsight, that like you also talked about. If you didn't have that experience of disconnecting from what was innate in your life and in your culture, from not having that, when it came back around, there wouldn't be the same value placed on it and it wouldn't have spoken to in the same way. These periods of challenge and through that period and then through whatever challenges I'm sure you went through when you were actually starting Grass People Tree, same with me and MemberMouse. All sorts of mistakes being made, trying to find the way, doing this thing where you don't know what you're doing, pushing through having that internal vision or why that you're shooting for, it's all important.

Then the danger comes when we create something, when we birth something, Then again, it's the same with our relationship to our thoughts. We then think, "Oh, this is me. This is my identity." This is I think, down the line is like, it's always important to... because trust is important. But if we stop listening, if we stop checking in beyond our own ideas and our own figuring out of how things should work, then we might miss something inside of us telling, "Hey, you've been doing this for 10 years, but there's something else calling." It can be scary to have worked in something for so long, created something, been a part of something and then reinvent yourself, even though the thing that's guiding you to want to reinvent yourself is the same thing that guided you to start those other projects and be successful in those other things.

Yeah, you get to a point where... I've gotten to a point where I'm like, "Well, the things that have been accomplished in life are not necessarily my doing." It's like they're my actions, but the energy and the guidance and the passion, desire, whatever you want to call it that fuels those things, where does that come from? That's an interesting question, and it's one of those questions that can't be answered by anything external.

Rui: It's a very profound question also, because it depends on what we believe, what I believe... Everything is the causes and conditions, and the causes and conditions can be broken down into almost infinitive, it goes way back, why we do what we do. There's something obviously, personally internal for us in this physical body. But I think there is to me, I think it goes far beyond that and I think that I will never find out why. This is why I felt to say, it's my passion, it's almost a very superficial way of understanding or concluding it is not, there's so much more than that. Why am I on this journey doing it? I don't think also it's my place to get myself into that spiral of thinking why? People will ask me why, and you have to give an answer that sort of satisfy people. But for me, I think why question sometimes it's quite tricky. Because it gets you distracted again.

Eric: It's also arrogant, if you think you can answer it.

Rui: Yeah, absolutely. I guess is going with it, but going with it, it sounds so easy, but it's very hard to, like you said, if we're out of tune with what we do, then you can't go with it like a business. When I feel my experience in recent year also, I felt like we were in such a good flow. A constant flow and I feel with the way we deal with things are very agile and very flexible and just very easy. I think that's a good state to be in, so when things are out of that, then you more in tune with that. But then the paradox with that is you mustn't feel too comfortable without either. I think there's a danger for comfort. I think that's one of the things that it's a threat almost. Comfort is a threat, because when we feel comfortable we become lazy, and then we stop wandering, we stop being curious and we were staying one flock of birds, we don't want to go and visit other birds. I think that's when things get static and we stop learning. Comfort is a funny thing.

Eric: It's almost like... in a way, it's almost synonymous for stagnancy. I mean, we relate it to a positive connotation, where we say comfort is a good thing and stagnancy is a bad thing, but both of them, there's no flow happening. There's a there's kind of a stasis, and ultimately, change is going to happen. If something is not moving, then it just means that either we can't perceive what's actually moving which is possible and that it'll show up at some point. Because even for a plant, you plant the seed in the ground, the roots start to grow and you don't see anything on the surface for a while.

Patience, it is a very tricky business, because sometimes you may think, "Oh, nothing's happening, I need to do something." But maybe that's the time where patience and trust is something to move into, and it's so hard, I would say for people wanting to start things, and trying to find their way to find themselves. Because there are so many things, telling you how to do it and telling you the way that you should do it. In a state of I think showing up as a student is a state of vulnerability and naturally as a student, you need to put your trust in the teacher, so it there's a huge possibility of being taken advantage of as a true student.

I think a lot of that is happening, where people want to learn something. But then all that's happening is they're just, they're not being taught like you were taught by your teacher and just experience, experience, experience. Don't ask me questions, don't try and figure it out. Just experience, because the experience ultimately, it's through experience, the teaching there is that ultimately, no human being is the teacher. The teaching is inherent, everybody has access to the teachings if you don't think about it too much. The benefit of "in-person teacher" or a physical teacher like tea is, it allows us to expose ourselves to something beyond our minds, which then leaves an imprint. It leaves a deeper imprint within us that then like a seed will flower into something more physical, something that will end up taking action in the real world. But I don't, I don't see that in anybody teaching out there, it's always immediately about execution doing, there's none of that time where you just be an apprentice.

Rui: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I guess it's about the intention to teach and the intention to be taught, right?

Eric: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rui: If we're talking about tea, a lot of people go into training to get a certificate so they can go and brew tea properly in a restaurant. That makes sense in the level, but if we looking at the profound way of learning, I guess that almost the first step. Ultimately, there's no teaching per se. There's no learning, it's just a journey. I think, the teacher, whether it's the tea or person, we should always know that it is a vessel for us to get to somewhere and wherever it takes you is dictated by your intention and the actions, and then the causes and conditions by those things. But it's never a destination. I think even just from the clarification of why we learn a very specific subject, I think there's a lack of understanding. I think further investigation, I guess. Or maybe lack of nurturing, I don't know.

I think it's interesting, you mentioned this because I was just writing a question list for people who want to go into learning and want to go into teaching. Because I see a lot of things out there, that you can categorize as culturally appropriated, or you can categorize as racist, or whatever that is. I think there's a lot of question marks out there. But I think in when it comes to teaching, we can also bring in a diversity of that, how things can be learned in a different way. Even a lot of teaching, learning, for me when I learned it wasn't even verbal. It is so intuitive and so physical in the sense of kinesthetic. I think we're not so much used to learn that way. That the way to learn in this specific ways is also slowly dying, because it almost felt like it doesn't fit in anymore. It takes too long, and you feel you're not getting anything. It doesn't quite fit into the capitalist world or maybe the modern world.

Eric: I'm an optimist. I mean, I certainly see it's declined. But I also see that it can't die. It'll come back around, I mean you're a vessel for that spirit. You're carrying on those traditions and so it's because there's something there that is fundamental. If everything falls apart, and everything disappears, what will remain? There is no answer to that question that we can provide. But certainly, we know what it's not going to be, a lot more easily than we know what it is going to be. What it's not going to be is, most of the things we spend all of our energy interacting with and nurturing, all the physicality and everything like that. But there is... I hear you, I mean there is a decline. Also, I think an awakening at the same time. I think there's.... At least I can't say for anybody else, but at least I feel it.

Rui: Yeah. I also feel like, if we're looking at the grand spectrum of time, where things are going. Whether or not this thing is dying or not, it really isn't about me personally. It's so vast beyond my comprehension and my ability, so to even say I'm doing this because I don't want to see the tradition die. Yes, I'll be lying if I say it's not because I'm still a human and there's something very special to me as somebody who grew up from there. But I think that's also one of those things that you have to you have to put yourself aside and just focus on the work that you do. You call it work or whatever that is, your calling.

I don't know, just whatever you're sharing. I think part of the will have to go beyond that self and to constantly planting the seeds. Because for whatever reason there is you're doing it with this intention, and I guess the optimistic side of it is you planting the seeds, then who knows? Something's going to come up and grow in their own way. I guess that's something that gives

me that sense of I just got to keep on doing it and be focused on that. But I think it's not my place to even say okay. The way of teaching is dying, we've gotta do it fast.

Eric: Yeah, and even optimism is just another word for trust, you know?

Rui: Yeah, I guess so. Not blind trust, though. It has to be, trust and distrust has to always go hand in hand.

Eric: Oh yeah. Depends on which level you're talking about. The level of when I'm talking about trust, it's more of like an internal. But in order to even practice that, there has to be some way that is being done to connect with that part. Because even the internal parts, when you first go into it, a lot of those have been conditioned by external things so they can't be trusted. But that's part of the journey, is to start walking that path and see what happens.

Rui: There just so much like, I guess you're talking about the inner ecosystem and the resources that the trust we have and I think there's actually a lot of knowing that we have, and we haven't been able to tap into and know how to figure out the map and to utilize it. For once something open up for you, you just jump into that, take that opportunity and go in there. I guess that's where you meant earlier by the past, in the past. I think the past took inward and to be curious. Even to say this tea is not for me, it's a thousand dollar for 20 grams, but no it's just not for me and that's a trust.

Eric: But even that, I can say the same thing that you said. I know that it's like, even everything that I'm saying there, I have no right to say it. At the same time, I'm saying it. It's like there becomes this in a true state of trusting this is, it's like everything that is just is. We have no reason why we're having this conversation. We're having it and we enjoy it, and yet it's just what we're doing, because this is what's happening today and we accept that. That's it.

Rui: Yeah, part of the path, I think.

Eric: Yeah. As always though, it's been really nice catching up with you.

Rui: Likewise, Eric. I so enjoy this sort of conversation. Particularly I feel like it's so needed for me for a few weeks when I'm roaming around and it really helps me to defer like me exploring but in a different way. Yeah, it's been fun. Thank you so much.

Eric: Yeah, I feel the same way, so thank you so much. If people want to learn more about what you're doing and get in touch with you, where can they go?

Rui: They can go to grasspeopletree.com or they can find us on Instagram @ Grass People Tree or just google us, Grass People Tree. Yeah, nowadays you should be able to find anybody anywhere, I think.

Eric: That's true. Again, thank you so much for coming on the show today Rui and I look forward to speaking to you again soon.

OUTRO:

Thank you so much for listening to my conversation with Rui.

I hope you're walking away feeling inspired about continuing on your own journey as an entrepreneur.

Many thanks to Rui for coming on the show and sharing so freely from her life and experience.

If you enjoyed this episode and would like to hear more interviews with successful entrepreneurs, experts, and authors, be sure to subscribe to our podcast on iTunes, Spotify, Google Play, or Stitcher.

We have a growing library of engaging episodes with many more to come.

Thanks for being here and we'll see you next time.