

RRP 102 — Lee Anne K.

Turning On the Light: Recovery, Resilience, and Radical Self-Acceptance

Presenters: Peter and Julie

Episode Length: 1 hour, 28 minutes

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Episode Summary

In this heartfelt episode, Julie and Peter welcome Lee Anne K. — a nearly nine-year member of the recovery community, proud straight ally, devoted letter-writer, and self-described number one fan of the Real Recovery Podcast. Hailing from Scappoose, Oregon, Lee Anne arrived at AA in May 2008 and holds a current sobriety date of March 12, 2017. Her story is one of remarkable honesty: a first marriage entered too young, a relapse after treatment, the slow climb back through step work, and the grace she found in service, connection, and radical reframing of life’s hardest moments.

Lee Anne shares how letter-writing became a cornerstone of her recovery, how self-care bingo cards and a 140-item “things to do instead” list keep her grounded, and why she chooses to love everyone “with a beating heart” — especially those in the LGBTQ+ community. Recorded on February 12, 2026 — the 20th anniversary of a traumatic assault — this episode is a testament to what is possible when you choose, day after day, to turn the light on.

Key Points

How Lee Anne found the podcast and community

- **[00:01:28]** Julie and Peter introduce Lee Anne as the podcast’s “number one fan” — a title she lovingly concedes to Julie’s daughter Cassandra. Lee Anne recounts bingeing roughly 70 episodes after finding the podcast business card, then deciding to donate.
- **[00:02:41]** Discussion of donating to the podcast through payroll matching and automatic giving — practical encouragement for listeners considering support.

Background and early life

- **[00:05:19]** Lee Anne reflects on her family of origin: no alcoholics, but depression-era scarcity, compulsive behaviors, and an unnamed need to fill an inner void. She identifies as a middle child and is careful not to blame her parents, noting that “everyone is doing the best they can with what they have.”
- **[00:06:36]** A significant and moving disclosure: the recording date is the 20th anniversary of Lee Anne’s rape. She arrived in the rooms 18 years ago — “it takes what it takes.”

The recovery bubble and protecting peace

- **[00:08:00]** Lee Anne shares her personal mantra, printed large behind her monitors: living life on life’s terms, protecting her peace, forgiving others for not meeting expectations, and choosing to turn down the volume on anything that does not align with

her emotional, spiritual, physical, mental, intellectual, social, occupational, financial, environmental, or life goals. Final line: “Self-care is not selfish.”

First marriage and drinking as escape

- **[00:19:14]** Peter asks directly: was drinking the main thing, and was it escape? Lee Anne confirms she married right out of high school into an unhappy situation, raising a stepson whose mother had drunk herself to death. Drinking began as a way to cope with the question: “What the hell did I do?”
- **[00:29:23]** The Simpsons moment: watching Homer accept Marge’s 30-day no-Duff-beer challenge, Lee Anne sat thinking her family must be thinking about her. The next day she texted them “I’m going to beat Homer Simpson” — they had no idea what she meant. She did 37 days, then relapsed when a neighbor offered a vodka orange juice.

First sponsor and finding AA at Nike

- **[00:30:50]** At a women in IT meeting at Nike, a colleague stood up and shared 17 years of sobriety. Lee Anne turned around so fast she nearly broke her neck. After the meeting she couldn’t get words out — the woman simply handed over her name tag with her extension written on it. Fran became Lee Anne’s first sponsor. Colleagues even lent her their cars to drive to meetings.

Treatment at Pathways in St. Helens

- **[00:35:43]** A DUI led to required counseling, which led to an opening at Pathways in St. Helens — a treatment center across the street from a small park. Lee Anne reframed the experience as “summer camp” to make it bearable. She danced so intensely at a karaoke event that she couldn’t walk the next day, leading to a medical discharge before completion.
- **[00:38:05]** Post-discharge she moved back in with her parents, then into the garage for her own space, later moving in with her son. A relapse followed while working a fourth step and navigating online dating simultaneously.

Current sobriety and how she maintains it

- **[00:56:46]** Lee Anne met her current husband two weeks after her last relapse — not recommended, she emphasizes — but she was upfront: “I’m new in recovery, my time will be limited.” He respected that. Her current sobriety date is March 12, 2017.
- **[01:01:00]** Her 140-item “things to do instead” list: send love texts, cook a meal for others, review the church prayer list and mail cards, read a comic book, dust picture frames. The list exists to break negative thinking and redirect energy.
- **[01:02:37]** Lee Anne distributes 10-minute coins to newcomers: one side reads “Unity, Service, Recovery — 10 Minutes,” the other side carries the Serenity Prayer. Her message: if you can wait 10 minutes, you might be okay.

Letter-writing as recovery

- **[00:26:00]** Julie describes receiving a letter from Lee Anne on a difficult day — calling it one of the best-written letters she’s ever received, a portion of which she keeps taped to her computer. Lee Anne explains she buys stamps in bulk and periodically reviews her contacts asking: who needs a love note today?
- **[00:28:44]** Lee Anne reads a line from a letter she received that morning: “I love your letters. You cover everything. You are real — hilarious. Don’t let anyone f*** with that.” She types 96 words per minute; writing letters feels as natural as journaling.

LGBTQ+ allyship and inclusion

- **[00:33:15]** Lee Anne speaks about her commitment to loving “everyone with a beating heart,” rooted in witnessing family members treated poorly for being gay or lesbian. She carries a straight ally sticker on her car and has attended NARA three times as a speaker.

Neurodivergence and identity

- **[00:49:08]** Lee Anne reflects on being on the spectrum — she was in talented and gifted programs, attended private school, and notes her brain “doesn’t necessarily work the same way.” Her need for balance and order (arranging wine boxes so the cooler was symmetrical before her last drink) is offered with humor and self-awareness.

Finding Lunch Bunch / Extended Family and Colette

- **[01:04:52]** Colette introduced Lee Anne to the Lunch Bunch / Extended Family online meeting after meeting at a She event where Lee Anne was singing. Lee Anne felt safe there in a way she hadn’t at the men-dominated Monday meeting in Scappoose.

Closing message

- **[01:24:49]** Peter invites Lee Anne’s parting words. Her answer: “If you are in a dark place, turn the light on. There are light switches around, there are candles. You have a choice. You are responsible for your own happiness.”

Guest Quote

“If you are in a dark place, turn the light on. There are light switches around, there are candles. You have a choice. You are responsible for your own happiness.”

— Lee Anne K.

Websites Discussed

- [Pathways Treatment Center — St. Helens, OR](#)
- [Lunch Bunch / Extended Family AA Online](#)
- [Alano Club of Portland](#)
- [GO THE DISTANCE — Recovery Through Physical Fitness](#)
- [Oregon Recovers](#)
- [Real Recovery Podcast](#)

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