

## TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 153-SHARE A HEALING EXPERIENCE

I'm Jill Baughan, and you're listening to the podcast called Find Joy...No Matter What.

This is Episode 153.

If you're in a tough place right now, your joy may seem like it's hiding--or gone.

I understand. But it's still there, I promise, just waiting to be resurrected. And this podcast is designed to help you do just that...no matter what else is going on in your life.

For just a few minutes each week, I'll tell you a story--one that just might inspire a way to uncover a piece of joy you might be looking for. Then, we'll consider how it might speak to your life, because even though you'll hear quite a few of my stories during our time together, I believe you'll find your own in every one of mine.

Finally, I'll offer a benediction to send you into your day--or into your night.

So. If you're up for doing joy shots with a friend today...have a listen.

Six years ago, Eric Evans was struggling to deal with grief when his wife, Jaime, died from cancer. He and Jaime ran an alpaca farm, and after her passing, Eric found that the alpacas played a critical role in helping him and his daughter process their sorrow.

*So in honoring the life of Jaime, and her love for the alpacas, [Eric] turned the farm into an agritourism/event place to allow others to experience the incredible blessing these animals give.*

*"Animals are very calming. They can be stressful at times, but they help you when you might not even realize it," said [Eric]. "This kind of interaction is something that my wife and I had originally dreamed - that we would be able to share this life with other people."*

So he started hosting events with the alpacas, introducing people to the healing power of spending time a few nonhuman friends. And at one of these events—the very first movie night—he met a special lady named Katie. They eventually fell in love, became engaged, and Katie began to share in the work and the passion of the farm.

Then in 2022, Eric gave Katie four baby goats (They named them after mountains: Summit, Sierra, Whitney and Atlas)—and those goats stole the show from the 40 alpacas! Goat yoga was an intriguing trend, and Eric and Katie decided to work up a business plan for bringing it to the farm. According to their website, *with only a few weeks of planning, marketing, renovating and hiring teachers and staff, along with adopting 12 more Nigerian Dwarf goats, Goat Yoga RVA was born!* (Richmond, Virginia)

*"Neither of us knew anything about goat yoga," said Katie. "We had heard all about the incredible health and wellness benefits that it provided, but we knew we had to try it. We wanted to share the joy the goats brought us with the community and surrounding area, as well as reach*

*out to individuals, families and children who struggle with loss, trauma or mental illness and make a positive difference in their lives. And what better way than incorporating yoga with goats?*

*Eric and I have both felt the immense sadness of losing people we love, and yet having the goats in our lives somehow makes the healing process easier. We fell in love with them the first day they came into our lives. They are pure unconditional love. Even on a bad day, we can't help but smile and be happy when we're around them, and we know you will too!"*

And that is their purpose at Pactamere Farm: to promote mental and emotional healing through human-animal interactions to those struggling with loss, trauma and mental illness. The goats have helped battered women, assisted living and nursing home residents, cancer patients in hospitals, hospice patients, caregivers of those who cannot help themselves, and people suffering from PTSD—just to name a few.

And, I might add, if you could just use a little more joy in your day, they're here for you, too.

I, too, had heard of goat yoga, and was really intrigued when I read this description:

*Come connect with nature and baby Nigerian dwarf goats! Our one-hour goat yoga class is taught by a certified yoga instructor and offers a deeply rewarding, light-hearted and unique experience. The instructor will take you through a sequence of poses, while adorable baby goats jump, prance, play and kiss all over you. This class is suitable for all levels. Bring your love for animals, sense of humor and exercise clothes you don't mind getting dirty.*

Who could resist this invitation? Not me! So last fall I texted Cousin Emily, whom I knew could also not resist this invitation, and she was in. It was Halloween, and the goats, we learned, would be in costume, so participants were encouraged to dress up too.

So, all decked out like Wonder Women, we set off wearing our capes, ready to get our groove on in a barn full of "kids." Ha. Most of the way there, we had our airing of life-grievances so that by the time we arrived at Pactamere Farm, we were ready for some play therapy.

First, we were introduced to the goats by name and personality.

Then Eric told us not to be surprised if they playfully pulled on our shirts ("We have one that likes to undress people," he said.), chewed our hair, and inserted themselves into our space for cuddles. And in answer to the number one burning question, he admitted, "They might poop on you. They might pee on you. They're like children. Have fun!"

To put people at ease about this delicate issue, at one time, Eric promised a gift card to anyone who found their mat being used as a target for goat elimination. But the plan backfired a little bit when people began hoping to get pooped on. So—that's no longer an offering.

Anyway, we all laid our mats out and turned our attention to the instructor who assured us that this was a real, certifiable yoga class, but goat-interruptions were allowed—even encouraged.

It took about 5 seconds of a tabletop position to find out that if you get on all fours, you *will* have a goat on your back in short order. Just standing there. For the heck of it. Like goats do. Sometimes jumping from your back to your neighbor's back. Also like goats do. Because they can.

So funny.

And I will say that there's nothing quite like a little downward dog with a goat face in yours, asking for a bite of your hair.

We could not stop laughing.

Forty-five minutes (and a lot of laughter) later, class was over and it was playtime—the purest, most exuberant playtime I'd had in a long while.

Eric and Katie were right. We couldn't help ourselves. Emily and I smiled all the way home...

[Pactamere] *farm also offers “Wine tasting with goat yoga, painting with wine and goats, animal assisted therapy classes, live music and movie nights, goat yoga brunch and bubbly, goat soap felting workshops.*

Last month, they sponsored two *weekends of Easter egg hunts, spring crafting, wreath-making and flower pot painting workshops—all in the company of goats, of course.* You can even order up a “goat gram”—goats delivering their own brand of cheer to a friend who might need a little pick-me-up these days.

Thanks to Eric and Katie, hundreds of folks in need of comfort and support can find it in the place where they found it themselves.

So, okay, maybe you're not into animals all up in your space. But is there a way that you could share—with someone who's struggling—an *experience* that helped you heal once upon a time?

Think of one right now—an *experience* that might be shareable with a friend who's having a hard time. For instance, when Ben's dad passed away a few years ago, a friend who had also lost his dad took Ben out to a favorite local spot for coffee, just to talk. That experience was so therapeutic, he has invited friends of his own who have lost a parent to have coffee or a meal, just to offer a listening ear.

Maybe you find comfort in the outdoors, and could invite a friend for a walk on a favorite path; maybe you found an escape in sports, and could share tickets to a ballgame. Maybe in your own difficulty you found comfort in doing a good deed for someone else, and could ask a friend going through a hard time to volunteer for a favorite charity or together help another friend in need. About the goats, Eric said, “This is therapy for *me*—watching others find joy in what we provide.”

And so my friend,

May you never forget what filled your soul on your own path of healing,

And may you always be on the alert for someone who is hurting, still on the journey,

And when you find that someone, may you offer to lend your heart as you walk them to another side of their pain...

If you know people who are aching right now, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Or you can go to my website at [jillbaughan.com](http://jillbaughan.com), click on a podcast episode and sign up to receive episodes in your inbox. Just don't miss a single one, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Share a healing experience from your experience my friend. And always, always remember: if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Thanks so much for joining me.

Till next time...

**NOTES:**

Dixon, Terrence. "Hanover Farm Brings Goat Yoga to Central Virginia." *WBBT 12 On Your Side*, June 21, 2022.

<https://www.nbc12.com/2022/06/21/hanover-farm-brings-goat-yoga-central-virginia/>

Goat Yoga RVA. <https://goatyogarva.com>