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**Vishen:** Hi, I'm Vishen Lakhiani, founder of Mindvalley, the school for human transformation. You're listening to the "Mindvalley Podcast," where we will bring you the greatest teachers and thought leaders on the planet to discuss the world's most powerful ideas on personal growth for mind, body, spirit, and work.

Hey, Mindvalley fans, thank you for joining the "Mindvalley Podcast." This is a really special episode. I wanted to do something new, something slightly interesting for you guys. So as you know, when I was writing my book, "The Code of the Extraordinary Mind," I ended up speaking to many incredible men and women across the planet doing great work in the world and who are also really obsessed with their own personal growth. In other words, everything from their fitness regimens, to the way they think, to their meditation, to their sleep, to their eating matter to them. And one of the people whom I interviewed, who just completely impressed me, blew my mind, not just because of how she thinks about these things, but the impact she's made in this world is Arianna Huffington.

Arianna Huffington is a living legend. She built up "The Huffington Post," which went from a simple website to a massive media giant that's a major force in American politics as well as other areas such as health and wellness. Huffington Post has become so dominant in health and wellness. Arianna was telling me that they get more eyeballs for their wellness section than their politics section. And naturally, Arianna herself loves this field. So Arianna's story goes something like this. She came home from work one day, collapsed, fainted, hit her head against a table, and she realized that while she had built an incredible business empire, she didn't have it all together.



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This got her to go into a mode of introspection to understand what was off in her life and what could she fix, and this led to her book, "Thrive," which basically dismantles this dumb idea that to be successful in life, you have to work hard. Rather, "Thrive" is about balance. And the book talks about this concept called the four pillars of wellness. Now, what you're gonna hear on this podcast is the original interview I did with Arianna Huffington when I was interviewing her for that chapter in my book. So this is a fascinating podcast. You're gonna learn a ton from it. It's rapid fire, but it may just change your life. Let's get started with Arianna Huffington.

**Vishen:** I'm Vishen Lakhiani, and this is the "Mindvalley Podcast."

Hi, everyone. This is Vishen Lakhiani, and welcome to a really, really, really special event on the Mindvalley Academy. With me is the Arianna Huffington. If you haven't heard of Arianna Huffington, I don't know what you've been doing because she is one of the most remarkable women in the world. She's been called one the most influential people on the planet, and she is the founder of "The Huffington Post," which is probably one of the biggest online newspapers ever, like ever. It influences politics. It influences how people live. It has made an amazing mark on the world. And so, Arianna, how are you today?

**Arianna:** I'm very good and I'm so happy to be here with you.

**Vishen:** I just got to say, on behalf of everyone listening, we love the fact that you, someone of your status, wrote a book on thriving through practices that the people who are listening, who are part of the Mindvalley Academy, are so used to doing as their day-to-day lives, from mindfulness, to better sleep, to taking care of their health and bodies. And it's amazing to have you as a spokesperson for this movement to get this out to the tens of millions more who need to be adopting practices like this.

**Arianna:** Thank you. I really feel that this moment is a very exciting moment to be alive because there is this global shift happening. You've been working in this field for many years, so I'm sure you recognize the difference when a lot of the practices that you've been advocating and teaching, like meditation, are now truly becoming mainstream. 2013 was the year when CEO after CEO came out not as being gay but as being meditators because it was safe. It was no longer seen as something flaky and New Agey and vaguely California, but something that was really, kind of, essential for a life that was not just successful, but thriving.

**Vishen:** Absolutely. Your passion for this idea of thriving started because of an event that happened to you on April 6, 2007. Can you tell us about that?

**Arianna:** Yes. April 6, 2007, exactly almost seven years ago, I was two years into building "The Huffington Post," and you know when you build a startup you are at least we're seeing we have the illusion that we have to work round the clock trying to make everything happen. I also have two daughters, and that was the time when my eldest daughter was going with me to check out colleges, to see where she wanted to apply for college. The bottom line is that I came back home from the college tour and collapsed from burnout,



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exhaustion, and sleep deprivation.

Hit my head on my way down, broke my cheekbone, got four stitches on my right eye. As I was going from doctor to doctor to see if there was anything medically wrong with me, I was asking all these questions that we often stop asking when we leave college. "What is it with life? What is success?" I came up with the conclusion that the way we define success, the two metrics of just money and power, is just a very inadequate way to define life. It's like trying to sit on a two-legged stool. Sooner or later, we topple over. That's when I came up with this idea of the third metric of success, which consists of four pillars: well-being, wisdom, wonder, and giving.

**Vishen:** So a third metric consisting of four pillars?

**Arianna:** Mm-hmm. Each of these pillars became a section of the book "Thrive."

**Vishen:** Right. That is the book that just hit number one in "The New York Times Best Sellers" list.

**Arianna:** Which is an indication of the times we're living in, that people are ready to stop living in the shallows, to stop shrinking their lives and themselves to their to-do list.

**Vishen:** Which, I was gonna say, reminds me of something I heard you say, which is fascinating. Now, in a moment, I want to ask you about those four pillars so we can go a little bit deeper and understand that. But I recall, in a speech you gave, you said that even though you started "Huffington Post" as a political news site, recently the sections for health and wellness, in terms of visitors, has overtaken the politics section. Is that true?

**Arianna:** Yes, it's kind of amazing because "The Huffington Post" remains the number one politics site in the United States, and it keeps growing. We're now offered in 90 million [inaudible]. But, the sections around the third metric issues, you know, wellness, healthy living, have now become so popular in that they've overtaken politics. Again, it's because so many people really want to re-examine how they are spending their lives. The tendency we have to really put our life on hold until we achieve a goal, and then we achieve the goal, and we think that our life will begin, but then we go for the next goal, and you see that pattern everywhere, and then we die, and a happy "Onion" headline in my book that said, "Death rate holds steady at 100%."

So when we remember that, we tend to re-prioritize what we value.

**Vishen:** So let's talk about those four pillars: well-being, wisdom, wonder, giving. I'd love for you to take us through that.

**Arianna:** Well-being is obviously the foundation. We are beginning to have the science to validate ancient wisdom. That if we're really going to function from a foundation of health and well-being, we need to sleep. We now have amazing evidence that sleep is truly a wonder drug, which goes very much against Western culture, that somehow sleep is for losers. "If you sleep, you lose," and, "We'll sleep when we're dead." All these things that,



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especially men, unenlightened men, kept repeating to themselves. Also, we now have incontrovertible evidence of the power of meditation in our lives.

Again, in another culture, in another community, you can refer to it as prayer, contemplation, quiet time. The bottom line is having some time to reconnect with our essence. In modern times, we become so obsessed with our projects and our smartphones that we forget that there is an essence, that there is a centered place in us. Every religion, every major philosophy has talked about that, whether it's Christianity, "The kingdom of God is within," or whether it's a scientist like Archimedes saying, "Give me a center to stand, and I can move the world." It's the recognition of that incredible strength, wisdom, and sense of well-being that's inside us that we often do not give any time to connect with.

So that's in a nutshell, obviously there is a lot more, you know, the importance of well-being in our lives, and that's where at the end of each section, as you know, I have three little steps of how we can begin on this journey. I know a lot of the people watching now are already advanced on this journey, but I feel that wherever we are, whatever our entry point is, whether it is pain or loss or simply a poem that touches our soul, or a scientific finding that convinces our skeptical minds, it doesn't matter. Whatever the entry point is, they give. That's the message of "Thrive." And begin to integrate these little steps into your life.

It, kind of, turned out to be 12 steps. I didn't intend it to be that way because there are four pillars, four sections, three steps. But actually that's, kind of, perfect because we are addicted to a completely destructive way of living.

**Vishen:** So, out of curiosity, what are some of the daily practices that you do for your well-being? I know you started sleeping more.

**Arianna:** Yes. Well, after my collapse seven years ago, I started integrating more sleep in my life. I went gradually from four to five hours to now seven to eight hours. And that's, kind of, a priority for me because that's what I need, to be fully present in my life and to bring joy, and not just effectiveness into my daily life. That's very important for me. I don't want just to be effective and productive. I want to be joyful because I love that feeling, I love being here with you after eight hours of sleep and after meditating, which I do every morning. I do at least 20 to 30 minutes. Over the weekend, I try to do an hour, an hour and a half. I just love it. It's like a magnet now that draws me in.

I try to do some kind of movement. Even if it's, like, 15 minutes of yoga postures or jumping on my stationary bike, and doing 20 minutes, even if I don't do a full workout, I try to integrate some movement. A key here for me is I used to wake up and the first thing I would do is go to my smartphone. Now, I don't do that. Just taking this... Sometimes it can be literally a minute to just look ahead at my day, fill myself with gratitude for the blessings in my life, set my intention for the day. It just immediately takes this urgency, this false urgency that we bring into our lives, that is such unnecessary stress.

**Vishen:** I love that. So it's meditation, movement, gratitude, and setting an intention for the day. That's how one of the most powerful women in the world starts her day.



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**Arianna:** If you think of it, it doesn't take a lot of time. But then I can bring that quality into my day, and then things happen in the course of my day, your day, I'm sure everybody's day that are challenging, that require us to deal with problems. So when that happens, I am in a place from which I can address them without being overreactive, prioritizing what I need to handle right away, and without stressing about bad things happening because life is full of them.

**Vishen:** That's beautiful. That is such great advice. What I love about it is, it's easily implementable for anyone who does this. Coming from you, it's gonna be taken with a lot of seriousness. Now, let's talk about the second pillar, which is wisdom.

**Arianna:** So, when you look around our world, you see a lot of very, very smart leaders in politics, in media, in business, making terrible decisions. It's not because they don't have high IQs. It's because they're not wise. They're not connected with their own wisdom. They may not even realize that they have inner wisdom. So I feel that a real priority for leaders now is to connect with that inner wisdom, but for everybody, too, wherever we are. I mean, I've been talking a lot in colleges because I love, as you do, to reach the millennials so that they can make choices now that will mean that they don't have to lead their lives out of the collective delusion that I led my life under that burnout is the way to success.

Whether I speak to students or CEOs, it's the same thing. It's like connecting to that inner wisdom requires learning to disconnect from our technology and our devices and all our distractions. We have role models for that. With that, I love to talk about...I mean, I like to talk, for example, about Padma Warrior, the Chief Technology Officer of Cisco. She's talked at our "Thrive" conference last year. She talked about she gets eight hours sleep, she meditates, she writes haikus, she paints, and every Saturday, she takes a digital detox, and she runs tens of thousands of engineers.

So I tell everybody, I tell myself, "If the CTO of Cisco can take a digital detox day, so can we." If we want another older role model, take God. He worked hard for six days, created heaven and earth, and on the seventh day, he took off. I mean, that's the Sabbath day. That's the day of renewal and recharging.

**Vishen:** Beautiful. Now, let's talk about the third pillar, which is wonder, because that's an unusual one. I've never heard anyone bring that in.

**Arianna:** Wonder allows us to connect to the mystery of life. We cannot be in a state of wonder at the big mysteries and at the little ordinary miracles of life, or even just the ordinary beauty that we encounter every day if we are perpetually rushing. There's the term "time famine," perpetually being busy, perpetually being overwhelmed. That is really the death of wonder. So I was talking to Reid Hoffman when I was at LinkedIn to speak to the employees there. He calls himself a "mystical atheist." I love that because wherever you are along the spectrum of belief, it's incomprehensible to me not to recognize that life is an incredible mystery.

When we connect with that through just daily being present and allowing ourselves to experience the wonder of life, our life is so enhanced. It's just amazing. I say that as some-



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body who used to live my life perpetually buried in my thoughts, on my smartphone. I remember when I was in New York one day and I saw a beautiful building, and I noticed it for the first time and I asked a friend, "When did that go up?" And they said to me, "1890?" So it was a building that's been...you know, for a century, and I would go by, I don't know how many times a week, and I had never noticed it before. That happens to us all the time. There's beauty around us that we ignore because we always think that what matters is the next goal or the next meeting or the next project, and not the present moment.

**Vishen:** Beautiful, beautiful. What you're talking about in terms of wonder, that reminds me of mindfulness, being fully mindful of where you are right now, mindful of what you're eating. Would you say it's a similar concept?

**Arianna:** Yes, absolutely. It also has an element of wonder, which is a little different than mindfulness, in the sense that... Let's take an example, coincidences. People love coincidences. They love recounting coincidences. Because what that does, it makes us feel that we are part of something mysterious and magical. We may not understand it and we may not try to comprehend the blueprint, but there is a blueprint. We're not here in any different universe. A kind of leading life of no meaning. We may not fully comprehend the meaning, but there is meaning, and that's why we love recounting coincidences. I have a whole section in the book on coincidences. Some of them are very trivial coincidences. They don't have any major cosmic significance. But I mean, I can't tell you how many atheist friends I have who said to me, "You won't believe what happened," or, "You won't believe the synchronicity." It's like what scientists now call "timescape," the recognition that time is not actually sequential. It's not the past, the present, the future. It all exists at the same time. Of course, mystics have talked about that. But it's great even in our prosaic daily lives to allow ourselves to get a glimpse of that.

**Vishen:** Beautiful. Now, let's finally go on to the fourth pillar, which is giving.

**Arianna:** So, our culture totally celebrates go-getters. It's all about go-getters. I think, if you look at modern science and the science about happiness, we recognize that a shortcut to happiness is actually giving. Therefore, it would be absolutely wonderful if we can start celebrating go-givers as much as we celebrate go-getters. When you look at the science, it's just stunning how we are wired for giving, and our genes reward us when we give. In fact, all the inflammatory markers that are the precursors of disease go down when we're giving and they go up when we're simply engaged in self-gratification. Now, of course, life has got to be a mixture of both.

But when it is purely narcissistic and purely about, "What's in it for me," we're just missing out the abundance of the universe and we are always living from a place of lack. I was very fortunate, Vishen, to have a mother who was a natural thriver. We lived in a one-room apartment in Athens with no money. My mother always made me feel that we were bigger than our circumstances, that we were full of infinite possibilities. I can't even tell you how she made us feel. So she always was in a constant state of giving. My mother once was wearing a little necklace, and a stranger, a woman admired it, and my mother said, "Here, have it." The woman sort of looked really surprised and said, "What can I give you in return?" My mother replied, "It's not a trade, darling. It's an offering."



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That was the way she approached life. What mattered to her was our education. And so she borrowed, she worked as a housekeeper, she did anything for her two daughters to be educated. She had two dresses. She didn't care about that, but she cared about our education. But her idea of education was more like yours. It wasn't just about cramming information in. It was also about connecting with our own wisdom, connecting with our own sense of possibilities. She actually taught us to meditate when I was 13 years old. Though I did not integrate it into my daily life the way I have now, at least I was aware of it.

**Vishen:** Well, you had an amazing mom. I can see where you got some of your characteristics from. So, Arianna, speaking of you, I want to ask you two questions. The first is a question I asked Elon Musk, and I'd like to ask it to you, and it's, "What makes you Arianna?" I mean, if we could distill you and try to extract your essence, what is it that makes you you, if you could say one thing?

**Arianna:** I would say trust. I have an incredible trust in life. One of my favorite quotes is a little misquote, "Live life as though everything is rigged in your favor." So, I really profoundly believe that whatever has happened in my life, the biggest heartbreaks, the biggest disappointments were exactly what was needed to help me get to the next stage of my own personal evolution and growth. I now believe that so profoundly. I always got a sense of that, but now I'm, like, completely clear about that. I can literally see the hidden blessing in every bad thing that happened.

**Vishen:** Beautiful. Now, the second question I'm gonna ask you is a question I asked Richard Branson, and that is, "If you had one piece of advice to anyone in the world who aspires to, kind of, have the positive impact on the planet as you have had, what would that bit of advice be?"

**Arianna:** It would be stop worrying. In order to really stop worrying, take time to get to know yourself. Because, for me, that was the biggest lesson of Greek philosophers. Socrates said, "Know thyself." If we don't know ourselves, if we don't know our essence and where our true power comes from, we really are going to believe that our true power comes from accumulating victories and trophies and money and the recognition. And these are all fine. I'm not putting any of that down. But it's not ultimately what our life is about. When we think it is, that's when we really waste the rarest possibilities, and that's when, even in terms of our own achievements, we become completely preoccupied with every little thing that happens and lose our resilience.

**Vishen:** I like that, thank you. Now, Arianna, there's so much beautiful wisdom that you have in your book and in your various talks online. Two recommendations for everyone listening. Number one, go to YouTube and search for Arianna's talk at Wisdom 2.0. Put in "Wisdom 2.0 Arianna." It is an amazing speech...

**Arianna:** I'm wearing the same dress...

**Vishen:** ...and you will love it. It's a beautiful talk. I just listened to it. Now the second thing is, buy the book "Thrive." It's a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful book. Buy the book "Thrive"



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because that book needs to be in the bestseller's list as long as possible, because it's a reminder to humanity about the third metric, about the fact that we need to take a step back, relax, truly go within so we can truly thrive. Now, my final thing, Arianna, that I want you to share with our audience is your 12 steps. Because I heard you deliver this in a speech, and I thought it was mind-blowing. In fact I thought, Arianna, we have a mutual friend, Peter Diamandis, and both you and I are very involved in XPRIZE. I bet you've been to Peter's office, right? You know how he has this poster on the wall, "Peter's Laws"?

**Arianna:** Yes, I love that.

**Vishen:** That's a beautiful poster. So I watched you talk about your 12 steps, and I fell so in love with it, I'm commissioning an artist to create an Arianna poster with the 12 steps.

**Arianna:** Wow, thank you so much. I love that.

**Vishen:** A beautiful poster that we're gonna give away to everyone who's listening so they can print it out and put it on the wall. So that's gonna be my gift to you. But tell us about the 12 steps. Let's go into that.

**Arianna:** Okay, wonderful. So, as we said earlier, there are three steps at the end of each section of the book. So at the end of the well-being section, the first step is, unless you are one of the very wise people who already get all the sleep they need, start by getting 30 minutes more sleep than you're getting now. The easiest way is to go to bed earlier, but you could also take a short nap during the day, or a combination of both. This is really an opportunity to immediately improve your health, creativity, productivity, and sense of well-being. The second step is move your body. Walk, run, stretch, do yoga, dance, just move, any time. The third step at the end of the well-being section is, for those who do not meditate, introduce five minutes of meditation into your day. Eventually you can build it up to 20 minutes, 30 minutes or more. But even just a few minutes open the door to creating a new habit, and all the many proven benefits it brings. I have 55 pages of scientific end notes in the book, benefits.

So then at the end of the wisdom section, if we're doing the 12 steps, this is step number 4, listening to your inner wisdom. Let go of something today that you no longer need, something that is draining your energy without benefiting you or anyone you love. It could be resentments, negative self-talk, or a project you know you're not really going to complete. I realized that vision. I realized that you can actually complete a project by dropping it. If you drop projects you're really not going to put your energy into, you are left with what you're really going to put your energy into.

Step number five, start a gratitude list that you share with two or more friends who send theirs to you. Step number six, have a specific time at night when you regularly turn off your devices and gently escort them out of your bedroom. Disconnecting from the digital world will help you reconnect to your wisdom, intuition, and creativity. We already talked about that, when you wake up in the morning, don't start your day by looking at your smartphone. Take one minute, trust me, you do have one minute, to breathe deeply, be grateful, set your intention for the day.



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So, at the end of the wonder section, step 7, focus on the rising and falling of your breath for 10 seconds whenever you feel tense, rushed or distracted. This allows you to become fully present in your life. For me, you know about the “Thread Through The Labyrinth” that Ariadne gave to Theseus so that he could get out after he killed the Minotaur, well, the thread for me is my breath. Returning to it during the day hundreds of times when I get stressed, when I get worried, when judgments come up, has been an incredible gift and is available to all of us. There’s nobody alive who’s not breathing. So step number eight, pick an image that ignites the joy in you. It can be of your child, it can be of your five-month-old daughter Eve, it can be a pet, the ocean, a painting you love, something that inspires a sense of wonder. Any time you feel contracted, go in, look at that image, it can be your screensaver to help you expand.

Next step, forgive yourself for any judgments you’re holding against yourself, and then forgive your judgments of others. If Nelson Mandela can do it, so can we. Then look at your life and the day ahead with newness and wonder because judgments are so draining, and self-judgments are particularly draining. So finally, the last three steps at the end of the giving section. Make small gestures of kindness and giving a habit, and pay attention to how this affects your mind, your emotions, and your body. Tiny, little things. It’s wonderful if you give up your job and go to Rwanda to start an orphanage. But you can start giving just by going to step 11, which is during your day, make a personal connection with people you might otherwise take for granted. The checkout clerk, the barista in the coffee shop, the cleaning crew in your office. See how this helps you feel more alive and reconnected to the moment. The final 12th step, use a skill or a talent you have, cooking, accounting, decorating, to help someone who could benefit from it. It will jumpstart your transition from a go-getter to a go-giver and reconnect you to the world and to the natural abundance in your own life.

**Vishen:** Beautiful. Thank you. So we’re gonna create that into a beautiful, beautiful image, a beautiful poster, and send it to everyone so that they can stick it in their wall as a permanent reminder of how to thrive. So once again, the book is called “Thrive” by the Arianna Huffington. Go ahead, get it, buy copies for your friends, buy copies to leave in park benches because then you’re fulfilling the giving thing, as well. Wonderful book. Go ahead and read it. Thank you so much for joining us, Arianna.

**Arianna:** Thank you so much. Great to be with you. If anybody wants to write to me and ask me questions, I’ll give you an email address, Arianna, with one R and two Ns, @huffingtonpost.com.

**Vishen:** You know, that was something that I really admired about you. I saw you do it on speeches. The first time we met, you gave me your email address and I was just, “We’d met for only five seconds.” I just think that says so much about you.

**Arianna:** Thank you. I love connecting with people and continuing this important conversation.

**Vishen:** Well, this audience is going to send you tons of love letters. So thank you, Arianna.



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So I hope you enjoyed that. For more information on this podcast, to get your hands on resources mentioned in this episode, plus transcripts, additional learnings, go to [podcast.mindvalley.com/arianna](https://podcast.mindvalley.com/arianna), A-R-I-A-N-N-A. Don't forget to rate, review, and subscribe to the "Mindvalley Podcast." Until next time, this is Vishen Lakhiani.



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