We Outside Podcast Transcript
Episode 4: What If the In-Between Is Where We Learn to Lead?
with guest, Kendra Coupland

Kendra Coupland: The other piece I would say, and my roommate said this to me recently, she was like, we were talking about AI and this kind of emergence of AI and like all the fear and the being pushed down our throats. And then she was, she was like, "You know, there's also no Star Trek without AI because they get on their spaceship and they're like, 'Ship, charter course to whatever galaxy,' and then the ship does it."

[00:00:21] **Ain Bailey:** Yeah.

[00:00:21] **Kendra Coupland:** You're not like sitting here plotting up maps of like how to get around the universe. You just say, "I wanna eat whatever," and then I open the microwave and there it is.

Intro: Welcome to We Outside. Welcome to We Outside. Welcome to We Outside. Welcome to We Outside

Ain Bailey: Welcome to We Outside, where we explore the unseen dimensions of leadership through conversations about spirit, nature, and what it means to be fully alive. I am your host, Ain.

Y'all, there are seasons when the body ends the debate. The old strategies stop working, the relationship is shifting daily, and maintaining the appearance of stability takes more energy than one could ever have imagined. Kendra Copeland, yoga grand master, has spent decades studying what becomes available when an old form loosens and the next one has not yet arrived. Through tantric practice, teaching, parenting, and community leadership, she is living inside that question on multiple scales, in her body, in her family, and in a society whose familiar structures are shifting beneath us.

Kendra does not treat transition as a hallway to hurry through. She understands it as living terrain, full of grief, intelligence, possibility, and power. This conversation asks what the in between can teach us about leadership. There are towels under boobs, a river without a bridge, Star Trek, and a pebble that refuses to count as nothing.

There is also clarity. Leadership is the practice of reading the water and creating the conditions for nurturing what is still in flux. I hope you enjoy this conversation

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[00:02:27] **Kendra Coupland:** So I'm Kendra Copeland. I use she/her pronouns. I am on the traditional territory of the Kwikwetlem First Nations, which is colloquially known as Port Coquitlam in British Columbia, Canada. And my internal weather today is very much like the real world weather in this location of the world, which is a bit overcast.

It's muggy. It's got a bit hot, but like kind of in a nice, this is like, you know it's summer kind of way. Yeah, it feels like things are alive, like you're the humidity of the forest.

Ain Bailey: And what's making you feel that way?

Kendra Coupland: Oh, perimenopause.I'm hot and sweaty. And also there's a bit of a moving through the brain fog. There's a little bit of like, yeah, overcast kind of fogginess happening. And also I feel like I'm emergent, like summer energy is, you know.

Ain Bailey: Beautiful. Thank you. As always, my name is Ain, she/they pronouns. I'm located on ancestral unceded land of the Muscogee people, which is Alabama. What is my weather today and why? I think my weather today is a little bit like a fall day, like a summer heading into fall day. I love the fall. I do not like the summer as much.

So there's a sensation of, ooh, here comes some cool weather. There's a little bit of a cool breeze on the air, and I think that's just my way of feeling anticipatory. I'm so grateful to be having this conversation with you. Then after this, I'm gonna go to find some plants to bring home, although I need to stop finding plants to bring home, but I can't.

So I will go find some plants with my aunt, and so I feel excited about who I might welcome home. So thank you So Kendra, I would love to start with what is perimenopause showing you about spiritual connection, relationship

Kendra Coupland: Yeah. So right now, one of the biggest things that I'm learning about is my body is in a transitional state. It's like a liminal space. And it feels like in some ways, like it's mirroring the larger collective transitional space that we are in.

So I feel like really tuning into this transitional space, not as like it's a crappy thing and I hate every moment of it, but like what can be... What, what wisdom is also here in my body that could be applied externally in the world as well? From one of the things for me right now is like listening is becoming this like strategic survival skill because again, if I leave the house in like polyester, we're... I'm just gonna be wet the whole time.

It's go- under the... Every- everything's sweaty. The heat is trapped in. So if I wanna survive with no AC, no fans, I gotta be in cotton. I gotta be in linen. I gotta be in loose-fitting, flowy, air's gotta be able to pass through. But I think also that kind of like listening to internal wisdom, but also the, the wisdom of others is g- is going to be our biggest survival skill going forward.

We have to drop these ideas that like, I know the way. I know what I need, and to just be in that like receptive place of like, this is what it is today, and this is what I'm receiving in this moment

Ain Bailey: Yeah, that's so real. You know, I'm now on HRT, but for five years I was trying to, like, not really take perimenopause as initiatory, being ushered into this new age and stage of not just body, but of womanhood potentially, and just a sort of a lineage practice. And then I was

like, I can't keep going with these hot flashes because of wh- exactly what you're naming is, like, I'm working, I'm with friends, with family, and then all of a sudden my brain is completely hijacked by how hot I am.

And like f- all thoughts are gone, all senses are go- like I ca- I can't hear anyone, I can't hear my... It's just hot. That is the only thing coming through. And there's the amount of being present that causes is really quite captivating. So I am just naming solidarity with what you're sharing.

Kendra Coupland: I think the thing about change is like the old strategies no longer work, right? So like whatever I was doing before, now I'm like, I don't have that to fall back on. So like the brain fog, I'm suddenly now navigating this place where it's like, oh, I forgot what I was gonna say, and I'm having the anxiety of am I looking unprofessional now? Or am I gonna be taken less seriously because I'm in this place where like I'm not on all the time anymore?

And so, you know, I think in our culture, even in our own internal ego, we have this idea that we have to remain stable. It has to be productive. It has to be regulated, recognizable all the time. And perimenopause is like, no, this is a transitional space.

This is liminal space. So this isn't - there, there is no s- real stability, or you don't get the comfort of familiarity in this space. You're discovering new strategies now of how to move in the world

Ain Bailey: Yeah. You know, it brings up for me, like existentially, life is an invitation to experimentation. As much as we say or try to act like we're experts in things, we're all just figuring it out as we go along. And this moment in time of being squarely inside of the uncertainty feels like a microcosm of what life actually is, independent of all of the ways that we've mitigated risk for ourselves, elevated comfort and convenience, et cetera.

And that there's some larger now invitation on a good day or in a good moment, right? Right? When I'm feeling my best and highest self, this invitation to find some stability in the instability

Kendra Coupland: You know, and I think historically, and still today in a lot of indigenous cultures, we had a lot of like kind of rituals or like practices around transitional spaces that in the West we just don't have access to anymore. And I was thinking about this recently because my child is out in their kinda mid to late teens, like they're going into their last years of high school.

But when I, I was looking back at like their aging process, I was like, we didn't really have a coming of age ceremony, and that was a massive transitional period in their life. And when my kid hit puberty, I remember them expressing this grief that they had over like all this new founders or this new responsibility that was being placed on them.

So I was saying things like, "You can put your own dishes away. You know how to fold your own laundry. You're old enough now. You know, after school you have to get your homework done. I don't wanna have to tell you all the time."

So this new responsibility was being placed on them, but at the same time they were losing the freedom of being like a toddler who could just be playing all day and there was no expectation,

Kendra Coupland: right? And so there was a real grief that existed for them, and that freedom was really kind of being taken away from them without their consent, without any control over the situation And we're telling them like, "Be excited, you're growing up. Weren't you so happy to be big now?" And they were so resistant to responsibility, and they would get so frustrated with chores. And at times I'd be like, "Damn, you're so entitled."

But when I really stepped back from this kind of like idea of what parenting should be or what they should be, I could see that they were like in grief. They were in their, in like a transitional space, and they needed space and time to grieve the loss of that freedom. And of course, now they're an older teen, they'll be driving next year, and so the responsibility also came with new freedoms. So for example, when they were little, I had to drive them everywhere. If they wanted a play date, they had to wait on mom to say yes. Now they're at the age where it's like, "I wanna go hang out with my friends," they get on the city bus and go.

Ain Bailey: Mm-hmm.

Kendra Coupland: So there's more s- there's a new type of freedom that is available, not a helicopter parent anymore where I'm like guarding everywhere they go, but now there's a responsibility of like figuring out the bus schedules and like making sure you get somewhere on time and how do I stay safe out of the house when mom isn't around?

But there was like that, there was a in-between space where like they were maybe 12 or so, not quite old enough to go far on the bus alone, but also with developing their own social life for the first time and not wanting to depend on me. I was transitioning from having to drive to soccer, drive to recitals, drive to friends, and I'm like, "I just want my life back."

And so in some ways I was like becoming a barrier to their social life. And I was also feeling like this need for like change of I'm tired, I've been driving for 12 years. I just want, I wanna, I wanna lay on the couch. I'm tired

Ain Bailey: Mm-hmm

Kendra Coupland: So it was like a major transition of like handing these reins over to my child of I've been guiding your life up until this point, and now you get to run your own life. Can't just toss it in their lap. It's like this, there's a transitional period of passing that power off, right? Where my teen's now at the point, I'm like, "If you're not feeling well, you need to call the doctor and make the appointment."

Because at some point I don't, I'm not gonna be able to call the doctor on their behalf, right? And they need to develop those skills in order to survive in the world. Like, they're gonna need to care for their own physical health. They're gonna need to take care of their own sexual health.

I can't be the intermediary. It's part of like understanding that what keeps them safe isn't me being like, "This is how it has to be," but rather like giving them those tools to think more critically and to trust themselves so that when they enter into a situation where they're like, "Ooh, I'm a bit over my head," and mom's not around, that they can navigate on their own, right?

And I really think that's what leadership is, is like I'm not here to tell them how to live their life. I'm here to be like, "H- here is some support so that you can decide how to live your life in your, on your own terms

Ain Bailey: Yeah. You know what I'm hearing really, and I'm always thinking about what are the skill sets or ways of being that help us to inhabit our leadership in ways that allow us to continue to be adaptive and flexible and responsive, as opposed to, I'm the leader and the control and the, this is the way of the thing.

Especially as, and we've named this, society is in a larger transitional period, right? And so many things are changing so rapidly, and the leaders who are, well, it's just gotta be this way or are defaulting to control and homogeneity and everything should look like this and all should operate in this one way.

That's really like a, a path to death and decay. But that the leaders who are like, "Oh, okay, who am I intrinsically that I have the skill to call the doctor when I need the support, or I have the skill to know, hey, maybe buy two of those things so I'll have a backup when I need it and I don't have to run out to the store and get it," right?

That the sort of intangibles I would call those are starting to become more important even than the sort of how we've identified leaders in the past. Now, this is dominant culture leadership I'm talking about, distinct from, I think, how do we show up as leaders in our own lives in a way that is about being, fully inhabiting our own agency and being in choice about what it is that we're able to do, and more importantly to what you named, being able to say, "Oh, I don't quite know the answer here or the next move, but I can begin to figure out what that is," or, "I can take some first steps and have it unfold in front of me," as opposed to trying to, like, jam a square peg into a round hole.

Kendra Coupland: Yeah. I've been teaching tantric yoga now for well over a decade. I've been studying it for 20 years, and this past year has been one of my biggest, like, teaching... I felt like, ooh, I really stepped up into, ooh, I'm more into eldership now.

And that was around, I had a student this year who was... It was a meditation where we were noticing sounds outside of ourselves, and they came back at the end and they're like, "I don't like that.

I don't wanna notice things outside of myself." And I was like, "What?" I was like, he was like an older white man I was like, "Of course you don't, baby," you know? But I had to really set that

aside and I had this recognition of, like, a teaching, no matter how profound it is, if the student can't receive it, it's impotent, right?

So it's not about, like, how do I control the student's emergence and this self-recognition? But, like, what, what conditions can I create that make that emergence possible, right? I can't control his s- sense of awareness. I can't expand that for him. But if he can't listen to the outside sounds, then he has to just begin with the inside experience, right?

Ain Bailey: Mm-hmm.

Kendra Coupland: So the practice as a teacher in that leadership role is I have to shift now to meet my student where they're at, and that means he's maybe just noticing his own breath. Maybe he's just noticing I have a body. Can't actually go into the external yet because his own nervous system doesn't have the capacity for it.

Ain Bailey: Right

Kendra Coupland: And so it was a major turning point for me as a teacher to be like, "Wow, I have all these beautiful teachings. I understand them fully, but if I can't transmit them in a way that people can actually receive them, then I'm not actually creating conditions for emergence to occur."

Ain Bailey: Yeah, you know what also comes as you're speaking is I think often about our language and just how much our language is connected to our capacity to receive, right? And so I'm thinking about conversations that I used to have with a cousin of mine, and we were super close in early college years, and then our paths started to shift a little bit, and so I was speaking in new ways that were just not translating anymore in our conversations with her, right?

And there's also this other side of exactly what you're naming, that increasing or allowing the conditions that he can increase his own capacity to hear, period, it sounds like, right? Before dictating, okay, hear the outside, hear the spiritual, hear the metaphysical, et cetera. Like, where do we begin? And I've been thinking similarly in, in about the village of, oh, really what we're doing is trying to create the conditions to allow people to fully inhabit their humanity, and I don't know how that's gonna show up for you.

You know, I mean, I've always said that. I'm like, I... But we've got nature here, we've got food here, we've got restorative practices here. We've got, you're encouraged to listen to your own rhythm and flow here. Something, spaciousness, something is going to emerge in there that you can hear that's going to actually be speaking to you that you can then be in that calm and response with.

And then that then becomes an access point or an entry point to what I hope is more reciprocal relationship with self, more self-trust

Kendra Coupland: So one of the, I was telling a friend of mine earlier today, I was like about, I've been in conversation about liminal space for a minute. Everybody, anybody who wants to have the conversation, I'm having it.

But I was talking about liminal space as we think of it as this bridge. I wanna get from point A, and then the liminal space is a bridge I'm crossing to point B. But I think it's probably more like navigating a river. It's like we have two solid banks. But the river itself has its own environment. It has its own currents. It has its own hazards and possibilities. You don't know what the next corner's bringing. And so for me, leadership is like learning to read the water and helping other people to navigate it rather than just trying to get everybody to the other side of this bridge, right?

And I think the tantric lens really, w- the way we look at consciousness is that it is, it's like in what we perceive to be still or open spaciousness, what we think is there's nothing occurring, that space itself is actually luminous. It's actually the space in which consciousness exists. And with that kind of understanding, it's not how do I get through those in between spaces? It's like, how do I fully inhabit those spaces, right? Because in the tantric sense, when an old form dissolves and a new one hasn't yet crystallized, that's when consciousness becomes, like, unusually fluid. And that fluid isn't a problem. It's not something that has to be resolved. It's like the opportunity.

And so in that sense, leadership is not about directing people to the other shore towards some sort of predetermined future. It's about stewarding that creative, spacious, luminous energy so that it can emerge into whatever it needs or wants to be

Ain Bailey: I mean, as you're sharing this with the banks and the river, like I can feel my body being like, oh, oof, what a great articulation of that. As someone who loves to shepherd people to the other side of a river, okay? So I'm like outing myself. Like, it's funny, what it makes me think of is starting in probably 2018, I started to notice that I was in a big time of transition, lots of uncertainty, lots of, oh, I thought things were going this way, and they're going some other ways.

And it wasn't all bad, but it wasn't all great either. And, and I was so wishing to be through the transition quickly. That's 2018, okay? Then there was a big dust-up personally in 2019. Then here comes COVID. Then, right? So by the time it was like, then perimenopause started for me in 2021, right? So then by the time I got to 20, I was like, okay, so un- so the liminal space is life, right?

Is that what I'm learning? Like, the uncertainty is actually, I can be certain that it's gonna be uncertain, right? Or that there's gonna be elements of uncertainty in this. But w- as you're sharing about this river, it feels so much more holistic and actually relaxing in my body to think of it in that way because it's, oh, I know the water.

I trust the water, and sure, here comes some boulders. Okay, now we're in some rapids. Now we're not moving at all, and I'm gonna have to paddle a little bit or whatever, like being with the changing of the water. But I find that I'm feeling a lot more expansive about what I'm starting to recognize as like life is life-ing, and it's gonna do whatever it's gonna do, and that's going to, in many ways, be uncertain.

And what my responsibility is is to be as closely connected with myself and to build and develop this trust in myself that I can navigate these waters. So thank you for that.

Kendra Coupland: Yeah, I mean, like, if you were to step into a river, if there was no bridge, we'd get swept downstream at least a little bit.

So, like, there's really no getting to the other side without moving down the stream a little bit probably. And I think for me right now, it's like there's so many transitions. In some ways I'm like, my kid is almost graduated. They're gonna go off to university. And I only have one child, so, like, this identity of, like, motherhood, which I've been holding so tightly for so long now is starting to shift. And, like, not that I stop being a mom when my child moves out, but the way that it looks is gonna totally shift on me.

And there's a part of me that's like, my impulse is to be like, "Yeah, we'll deal with it when it gets there" But I'm actually trying to grieve it in real time because, like, I don't wanna get to this point where, like, I have a blowout with my kid 'cause they need more space, and I can't give it to them 'cause I'm clinging to my own identity, right?

Ain Bailey: Yeah

Kendra Coupland: And then there's kind of this in-between space between, like, I am... was a mom, and now I'm becoming a different version of that. But I don't know what I am in this in-between space right now.

Ain Bailey: Mm-hmm.

Kendra Coupland: I think that space where I'm neither this nor that, Tantra really kinda understands that as, like, it's a space that's alive with potential. Like, that, that potential is its sparkly life energy,

Ain Bailey: Yeah

Kendra Coupland: and I have to be really careful to not rush to fill that gap

Ain Bailey: You know, two things are coming. As you were sharing before and naming that we don't quite have the rituals for transitional moments, I was thinking of when I was growing up in the '80s in Harlem, it, there were a lot of rites of passage programs. And I never participated in one, but can see as you were sharing about the grief and as you're returning to it now of that

there's something about naming and knowing that a transition point is coming, and being able to invite yourself into a process of, okay, how am I going to be with that?

So that in the, there's the anticipatory time, there's the intention, what's my intention inside of that, and then there gets to be, okay, and now I'm firmly in the becoming of, right? And that we don't have that, but what I'm hearing is that you're creating that inside of, okay, I'm seeing that my mothering is shifting.

It's entering a new phase of development. You'll always be mother, and this time of development is asking for new ways of being, and that feels very powerful to name, but then also to give yourself the space to be in the process of whatever that means as it unfolds. And this piece around the potential, I think everything is possible.

I don't believe in impossibility, even to the fantastical and whimsical and all of that. And one of the things that I, that has st- I don't know where I heard this or if it came to me in a download, but, you know, possibility is sort of like the wide open field of infinity, essentially. And that any time we start to move towards solution or certainty, we're narrowing the field of possibility, right?

Because then we're only gonna come out as this one thing, or even if that thing is multilayered, we're still going from here's this huge field of anything into now this thing, right? And so of course, that will always happen. As you named so beautifully, we are one thing and then we become another, and then that crystallizes and then it becomes too firm, and then we break out of that, and then we begin it again.

But I'm just really enamored of this idea of what is the opportunity in the possibility, in particular in a society that, maybe this is human, maybe it's just our North American societies that sort of resist change, that any type of being in transition is more about the discomfort of it than the possibility or the opportunity of it.

And I'm just grateful for what feels like this perspective that we share that's like, oh, no, there's a world here that we get to explore if we're open to it. And eventually, because it always happens, we will become, whether with intention or without

Kendra Coupland: Even if we were to return back to that river metaphor, there's like that period where we're, like, approaching the river. I can see it on the horizon. I'm like, "Ooh, the river's looks a little rough here." And then there's, like, the getting into the river. And then there's, like, arriving on the other shore, but you haven't

You're not up out of the water yet. You know, you're still waist deep, but I got my feet are touching the ground now. So there's like a, the, the transition isn't just river. Even though there may be periods of the chaos that happen in th- that central river section, there is the, like, going into the river, and there's also the coming out on the other side. And I feel like this transition in parenthood for me is like, "Oh, the river's coming. Oh, shit." You know? It's, I don't ... I'm gonna feel the grief, but also it's like, okay, so what do I need so that I don't drown in this river, you

know? Like, could I get a life jacket? Could I learn to swim? Could I get a raft? Could I get a friend to come and help me?

Ain Bailey: Yes

Kendra Coupland: are the pieces I need to put in place so I don't get, like, completely tossed and turned by this inevitable river that is coming? And I feel like when I kind of apply that in a larger scale, it's like the same thing. We see systems, institutions shifting, changing, collapsing, and we don't yet have the, the the know-how of what the other shore is gonna even look like yet. We haven't even g- fully entered into the chaos of those systems fully collapsing, right? So we're still in that, like, I'm approaching the river part of that transition. And I think there's, like, a grief in that because there is a, th- there is, to, in order for, to get to the other side, something has to dissolve.

We have to let go of the shore we're on, right? I've really firmly believed that, like, our resistance to shift, to change is our fear of death. I could link it back every single time. And I think that knowing, like, we're leaving one shore and going to the other, it, there's, like, a, a f- there's, like, many deaths that we have to go through many times over.

Like, I feel like I've died a million times in my spiritual practice in order to become who I am now. Like, old hurt versions of me had to dissolve, right? Parts of me that was contracted had to shift for there to be expansiveness. And now, like, my identity as a mom is shifting again, and, like, what I held so closely of, is, like, I'm a good mom or whatever it is, is now shifting, right? And we don't have a lot of ritual or, like, practice in being in those spaces. We're in between the what I was and what I'm becoming.

Ain Bailey: I mean, I am in full agreement, and as you're sharing this in particular around the societal piece that's crumbling and we don't quite know, and I've been saying we've been circling the drain, right? So there's a little bit of that water river metaphor in there, but I like your version better. I'm gonna be more optimistic.

We're grounded in nature. There's two banks right there. We're not just headed towards the sewers. But what's coming up for me is not just that inside of that initiation is an opportunity to be in intention, and I think that what's the fear that I hold is, one, back to the interconnectedness, that we're part of a society that's going through this, and I don't trust that people e- either have intention, frankly know what intention is.

I, I think I'm concerned that we are gonna just default to the ways of being that we've, that have gotten us to this point, that are sort of writ large, I could say distraction, apathy, you know, sort of a pointing fingers kind of thing as opposed to looking inward to see what is my part in this, y- you know, accepting sort of what we're told as opposed to interrogating it critically within our own values and our own worldview, not the worldview we inherited from our people, the own worldview that we've cultivated as like, you know, sentient beings.

And so, you know, I, I admit to... When you're saying it, I'm feeling like, oh yes, this is, this is good. And then I'm like, so why am I so sort of fearful of this when it comes to society writ large? Because lacking those actual sort of rituals for the process, and then I think lacking what creates those rituals for process, which is intention.

I just wonder what you would say about that

Kendra Coupland: I would say two things two things come to mind. One is that I think leadership is the capacity to steward emergence. So like now is a time where people are moving into leadership and like it's true, people don't have the capacity, the, like literally the, to look inward, to be expansive in their thinking.

That capacity is almost nil. There's like few people that I have in my circle who I'm like, w- when we talk, it's like big. It's beyond this plane, it's beyond this generation, this lifetime, you know, it's

Ain Bailey: Yes

Kendra Coupland: But the vast majority of people can't meet me on that level. And so my work isn't like to try to get them there, it's like creating spaces that they could become a little bit more expansive.

And then they'll meet the next leader who will create a bit more expansion and then they'll, those r- there will ripple, the people in their lives will become more expansive as a result of being in relationship with them. I think, so sometimes it's our leadership when we're creating these like pockets for expansiveness, it's almost like we cast a pebble into a pond and we think we've just made a tiny splash, but the ripples are actually f- much farther reaching than we th- than we know. And so like every time I show up and I put my own shit on back burners so that I can meet a student where they're at, is my tiny pebble in the pond, right.

You know, and like I, I have to stop thinking I gotta move the whole mountain into the pond is it's, a pebble's enough 'cause those ripples still reach the shore on the other side, right? Um, and also if you've thrown a few peb- pebbles in, you know, these, they start to ripple and create a pattern starts to emerge out of that, right? Like if you've thrown like three or four pebbles in, it's like you get a little circle here and then they start to interact and then it's, they ma- create like a wave form that forms out of that, right?

So every time I'm showing up in my community and I'm putting my own stuff aside and like creating more ex- places for people to just be more still or like just sitting beside someone in their grief or whatever it is, not making them shift it or change it, that's my little pebble in the pond. And I, and I have to trust that the ripples are forming the patterns that I can't yet see from where I'm standing.

The other piece I would say, and my roommate said this to me recently, she was like, we were talking about AI and this kind of emergence of AI and like all the fear and the being pushed

down our throats. And then she was, she was like, "You know, there's also no Star Trek without AI because they get on their spaceship and they're like, 'Ship, charter course to whatever galaxy,' and then the ship does it." They're not like sitting here plotting up maps of like how to get around the universe. They just say, "I want to eat whatever." And then they open the microwave and there it is. So there is kind of like, we're not sure where we're going with it yet. We're in that emergent space, but that's one of the possibilities.

Ain Bailey: Right. Yes

Kendra Coupland: And if we're, if we're only staying in this contracted fear state of like someone else is gonna control it and we're gonna be dominated and it's gonna be used to harm us, we're not even giving a possi- we're not even giving that possibility any airtime or any space to expand or emerge.

Ain Bailey: So this is beautiful. One, I wanted to talk about Star Trek today, and you brought it up, and I'm delighted, so thank you. Two, I'm really appreciating the pebble in the pond, which I think about all the time. I mean, that's in the starting of the village is just like, okay, the ripple effect was such a large part of my mental imagery about how to begin to create this village community.

Ain Bailey: But what you're naming in this moment that is really helpful is I am, when I'm in that lesser self mode of like, get the mountain into the pond, right? Like, A, if the mountain was in the pond, it wouldn't be a pond anymore, okay? It would just be a mountain. Where's even the water? So that is very helpful that in order, you know, that, uh, because I believe in the pebbles.

I know that that is the way. I know that it ripples, it reverberates. I hear about it all the time. So anyway, just thank you for re-grounding me into it. I have this thing of, like, wanting to put all of humanity into a little boat and just sail us into the future that is Star Trek, right? Like, not that it's perfect, but just that it's so much more possibility than what we're allowing ourselves to have today, and you gotta start with the pebble. So yeah

Kendra Coupland: I, and I really feel you because my biggest dream has been like, I wanna create a retreat center, which is so similar to your dream. And when I first heard about New Seneca Village, I was like, do I need to reinvent the wheel, or can I support this other vision, like a shared vision? And also when I was, you know, I'd tell my partner, I was like, "We should sell the house.

We, we have the funds. Our property's gone up in value. We can just buy land. We can start getting like tiny houses." And he was like, "We have a backyard, so we can start there.

Ain Bailey: Yeah

Kendra Coupland: Like, it would be enough to have some community just come over to our house." You know? I'm like, "But buy land," you know? Like get into like, you know, land

stewardship. So I, I often think so big picture, I even forget that the pebble is actually like what's most important. And I s- you know, would plan these like massive ... I had a large scale retreat of 100 people, and it was successful in some ways and challenging in other ways. But then last week I just had a, a walking meditation in the forest around my home where we still gathered, and we were all in silence together, and we all at points our footsteps would sync up, you know, and then they would come apart, and then they'd sync up again.

And there was equal amounts of magic in that forest walk with a small group of people as there was at this huge retreat. And I have to like remind myself, like the pebbles don't count as nothing

Ain Bailey: Right. Yeah, that's a great example. And also shout out to the big dreamers, right? But to your point, you know, and this is something I've been examining in my own life of, I have a deep desire to be philanthropic beyond the means that I have, right? Like, so let me be clear. I want to be a billionaire so that I can really give away money in service to life in the way that I think it should go, because I see so many fools running around giving it, giving their money in service to who the hell knows, and we're living in those, in their futures, in their imaginations, right?

And I'm like, "No, I wanna live in my imagination, the imagination that I know mo- a lot of us share, that it, it reverberates through the village, et cetera." And I'm like, "Okay, well, you do have some money, like, so give it away. If you're gonna be giving it away as a billionaire, then give it away now." You know?

Like, that's the invitation, which is also what I'm hearing you saying, like with your partner saying, "Well, let's start," you know, I know you have your yoga studio now in the back. Like, "Let's start there as far as tiny homes go," right? Like...

Kendra Coupland: And we built a loft in case somebody was like, you know, displaced that could like potentially host someone. So maybe we don't have the whole community move in to the same property and grow food together, but we have a vegetable garden, and I deliver some of that food to the downtown east side where a lot of people don't have access to fresh produce.

And I have a space, and actually I have a friend living in my home currently who was rent evicted. And like giving them stability, they're brilliant, a brilliant organizer. So for them to have stability now, their ripple can be like so much further. So I have to trust that process of like what feels like nothing. I'm like, "But it's not my big dream. I didn't buy like, you know, 25 acres," is actually not nothing.

And, and that in-between place is actually luminous. It's actually like vibrant. It's actually like so full of potential. I have a friend now living with me, and she comes upstairs for coffee, and we have these expansive conversations every few mornings, you know, and that wouldn't happen without this friend getting rent evicted,

Ain Bailey: Yes. Right

Kendra Coupland: And it's, it's sm- maybe small, but like, yeah, to wake up every few days now to like an expansive conversation is huge

Ain Bailey: I wonder what more you can say about stewarding emergence. You know, like what are the practices, questions? What's alive there in this invitation that you're presenting us with, in particular during this time of deep transition, both societally and for many of us personally as well?

Kendra Coupland: So it's a couple things. I think about, like, we, we already have some of the wisdom, and some of it is just not yet activated. So for example, when I was pregnant with my child, I didn't have a lot of people around me for, like, that collective, like, a birth ritual, and that was a massive transition in my life. But I did have access to a doula and a midwife even though I paid for them, and they did guide some of that. What I would have loved to have is a collective of, like, women who'd given birth around me who could, like, help me feel reassured and safe and like my body was gonna know what to do. I didn't have that, but I had something that I could begin with.

And after I had the baby, my mother-in-law, who I had, like, a contentious relationship with, she still showed up every single day to clean my house after... She'd come over after work and, uh, just do my dishes and prep dinner, and then she'd leave, and I would nap. And even though the relationship was, like, a little bit, you know, fraught at times and I was like, "Oh, I just had a baby. Get out of my house," her showing up allowed me to show up better for my baby in, in other ways, you know? And, like, so my ideas of, like, what community needed to look like in the, in a dream world, I had to actually let some of that go to allow what was actually holding me, right?

Ain Bailey: Yes

Kendra Coupland: Like, that was my reality is, like, my mother-in-law actually was one of the few people who did show up consistently.

Ain Bailey: Right

Kendra Coupland: Even if we don't see eye to eye on everything, even if our politics are different, she still showed up. My next-door neighbor, older white man, very conservative politics, we don't see eye to eye on shit. But, you know, I know if my partner was up on the roof and he fell, he'd be the first to call 911. If our house caught on fire, he'd be out there with a hose. So we don't actually have to see eye to eye on everything in order to start building something together.

Ain Bailey: Mm-hmm.

Kendra Coupland: And I think some of that is, like, I, I think to steward, we have to be willing to drop ideas of what we thought it was gonna look like. So I think that's part of it

Ain Bailey: That's a huge thing.

Kendra Coupland: Yeah. It's just

Ain Bailey: yeah. I, I just, I fully agree, and I just wanna name... And I'm saying huge not as a insurmountable. I'm saying huge as a, like, big epiphany. I just wanted to mark that. Yeah. Thank you.

Kendra Coupland: And the other piece I think is, like, I think leadership can look like helping to cultivate the rituals that allow transition to occur. So I'm thinking of, like, we have certain rituals that are in place. So for people get married, and we have a ceremony. We have a wedding ceremony. That's a transition. It's like I'm going from my individualhood into partnership now, and yes, in the West, it's like kind of this legalized formal document, but in many cultures around the world, it has a lot of other elements to it.

So we mark- we do mark some transitions, but oftentimes we don't have a lot of ideas of how to imagine them outside of, like, the constructs of religion or legality. Like, you know? So I think there has to be, like, we have to let ourselves sit in that kind of unknowing, luminous space for that to em- for a ritual to emerge. I think one of the things I've learned as a spiritual practitioner and teacher is, like, ritual actually can't be pre-planned.

Ain Bailey: Mm-hmm.

Kendra Coupland: I can, I can have the elements. Like, we bring my little offerings and my incense. Sometimes the universe answers back, and I gotta be like, "Shit, that wasn't the call. I gotta face this way."

You know? So I think getting more in touch with our own bodies to be able to receive that wisdom and to receive the messages that are coming in, like, we have to be able to tap into what is subtle within myself. You know? Like, if there's someone... How do I say this? A student said, uh, I told a student last week, I was like, "You know, God doesn't yell. God only speaks in whispers, and if your mind is so full of, like, what you think is gonna happen, you're not gonna hear those whispers 'cause God is not yelling for your attention, you know?"

Ain Bailey: Yes, I do know from experience

Kendra Coupland: We have to be, as leaders, we have to be willing to go really slow, get really quiet, get really in touch with the subtle for those transitional rituals, the spaces that we hold for emergence to happen to be possible. Those are the conditions we need ourselves as space holders, right.

So I think, like, cultivating more of that in myself, like, of like, I am here in this call on this video chat with you, and also the birds are chirping outside. Both are happening. So just creating a bit more, like, spaciousness for my experience.

It's not all just right here. It's here and this is happening around me. And being able to move back and forth between, like, the subtle and the internal to, like, the external and the meta, you know?

Ain Bailey: Yeah, I appreciate these offerings and really this piece around ritual being something that is also really response, right? It's not just our intentions, but it's also what is, what meets our call. And, you know, as you've named, the universe does show up how it wants to and will invite you into what's actually needed in the moment.

And, you know, it gets me thinking again to sort of the inflexibility that you're talking about before of the like, well, I can't have relationship with this person because they don't fully agree with X, Y, and Z. Or, you know, there's some bad blood between us or potential for bad blood between us, so, you know, I'm gonna cut off my nose to spite my face, uh, and not have my mother-in-law come in the hou- right?

And, and how I'm actually shooting myself in the foot, and also my baby in the foot, right? And so um, you know, it, it continues to speak to me around this not only adaptiveness, but sort of this ability to cultivate a deep trusting relationship with self, with the body, with spirit as it's activated through self and the body such that it can turn into the wisdom that's like, hey, actually life is what's right in front of me in this moment, and I get to choose.

You know, I'm sovereign in it. It's, it's still, I can flex my agency and all of that. And I'm going to have to look for what it is and not necessarily for what I want it to be, how I want it to be, what I thought it was gonna look like, but get to be present with what and how it's actually unfolding

Kendra Coupland: Mm-hmm. It makes me think of just one thing, which is like, there's like this proverb that I've heard, which is like, "If we wanna go f- if you wanna go fast, go alone. If you wanna go far, go together." And I keep thinking about like, "But I wanna go far fast."

Ain Bailey: Right. Yeah, that's right

Kendra Coupland: That's not what is possible. So it's like, oh, I'm gonna have to actually go much slower than I think I have to go. I'm gonna actually need a lot of restorative practices. I'm gonna go like a little bit and I'm gonna rest. And a little bit and then we're gonna rest. Because otherwise the slowest person can't keep up with the group. So if we're moving together, we, we're gonna have to go slow

Ain Bailey: Right. And then, I mean, I, I think about that proverb often too and struggle a little bit with it, but then I'm also like in my adherence to what is available for us in those moments of

restoration, am also like, oh, 'cause it even happened this year. There was onboarding new people, having to let someone go, onboarding another, right?

It, it's a lot of, and so a lot of my plans for the year were just completely disrupted, right? And so I was holding some level of anxiety about that, and then I was like, "Okay, you can choose to hold that anxiety or you can actually get with what's happening." And what's happening is that you're having to readjust.

You're having to slow down. You're having to pivot. Those things will come then.

Kendra Coupland: And to stay in your integrity, slow is acting fast

Ain Bailey: 100% what I was gonna say, which is like, and all is well, okay? Things are like, the things that I was holding as, of being anxious about are not even an issue anymore. You know? It's just like the... And I think in part because, A, you know, spirit is gonna do what it does, universe is gonna bring what it brings, but also in that slowing down and in that surrender, I was just like, "I gotta let it go because this doesn't feel good to hold this anxiety.

So let me just let it go and be 100% present to what's here and what I'm actually trying to create." And then it's like, oh, okay, great. Now we can, we, the collective we, the royal, universal we, can get to creating, right? 'Cause I'm not blocking it with my fears or even my disgruntlement about what this was supposed to look like and how easy it was supposed to be or how it was all supposed to fall in line by March, X date, you know, or whatever.

So anyway, I think that just, I forgot where I started, but I think it's just a shout-out to the universe. But al- but also to this process of being in integrity with myself. Thank you for naming that, of like, how do I know myself? How do I recognize old patterns that I actually don't have to choose to repeat?

I don't have to give myself over to this thing. I can try to give myself over to something new, so I'm giving myself over to letting it go, and that that comes from cultivating a reciprocal relationship even with myself, right? As a first port of call, and then outwards with others.

Kendra Coupland: Yeah. And like to stay in the vision of like New Seneca Village, it's like we have to be willing to drop what I thought was gonna happen this year. It's like if, if I wanna stay in the integrity, because if I, if I cling to this old idea, I'm actually not practicing, what I'm preaching, which is being present and being responsive and being, you know, p- prioritizing restoration. So to stay in the integrity and for this thing to continue to build in a good way, I actually have to go slow. And the slow is the fastest way to get there, 'cause if I rush it and I let this run, now I gotta repair relationships and I gotta fix... You know? Like that's actually, that's actually the slower route.

Ain Bailey: Right, exactly, which is what I was... Thank you. 'Cause that's what I was saying in what you're naming of, like, those moments of restoration or rest, as you had named it, of

waiting for the slowest person to catch up is, is not just that, is that's the opportunity for me to then sit still, And be present to, okay, well, we're here f- a bit farther down the path.

What's to see here? What's to know here? What's to question here? You know? I thought I was gonna be two miles down the road, for example, and we're a quarter mile. Great. Are we still wanting to go two miles down the road? Is that still where we're headed? Okay. It is? Great. Let's, let's pick up and go when the time is right, but if not, then let's pivot here before we get two miles down and realize we were meant to stop that quarter mile back and shift completely and move from there.

So thank you. I love what you're, um, naming, and then also for bringing me back to that thought

Kendra Coupland: There is a, a tantric practice about sitting in the in-between space, which I would love to share if there's opportunity for it.

Ain Bailey: Please

Kendra Coupland: This was something that my teacher, my, the late Sa- uh, Sally Kempton was one of my teachers, and she was a, she, she's a brilliant teacher. And one of the things she would often say is that God rests in the space between the in breath and the out breath. I didn't know what that meant. I was like, "Yeah, sure, got it."

And it wasn't, like, until, like, a decade into my practice that it hit me one day on some, like, idle Tuesday as I was inhaling and exhaling, and I was like, oh my gosh, there's this, that tiny gap of, like, nothingness in between. And that when she was saying God, it rests in the in-between space, she was talking about in that space where the breath is not moving in either direction, there's a nothingness, and yet it's so full of potential.

Anything could occur in that nothingness. So that was what she meant by the divine literally exists in that in-between space.

[Collective Practice] And so for this practice, I want to invite folks to just take a moment to notice the breath. You don't have to change it in any sort of way. Just simply feel the body breathing. Notice the inhalation arriving, and then notice that moment when the inhalation is complete. And before the exhalation begins, there's that small pause. So see if you can allow your attention to just rest there for a moment, not by holding your breath. We're not retaining the breath or forcing anything, but simply noticing that that stillness is already present. Doesn't have to be forced And it might be microscopic, like just a fraction of a second.

So the inhalation completes. And there's a turning point, a small fraction of a turning point where the exhalation begins A moment when the breath is neither coming or going, and yet there's still a quality of aliveness within it. There's still a spaciousness, uh, a quietness, and that spaciu- spacious quietness is luminous awareness. There's still awareness in that in-between space. And so just taking a moment to allow your attention to rest there.

So in tantric traditions, the space between the breath is recognized as the doorway into awareness itself. It's the place that we can sense that we're more than our thoughts, more than our roles, more than the constant activity that's occurring. And finding that in-between space, it exists actually everywhere.

There's a gap between every word I'm saying. There's a gap between our thoughts. Even when I think I'm hearing constant traffic, there's a small gap between each car that's passing by. So this is a practice of returning back to that inner witness, which is just observing the coming and going. That spaciousness is holding that coming and going, and it's a place where we can meet change with clarity rather than just being swept away with it. And one reason that I love this particular practice is that the breath is an anchor that we carry until the day we leave this place. So it's a place of stability that we can return to again and again. Regardless of what life is throwing at us, you have the breath as an anchor, there is a space between the inhalation and the exhalation, which is full of vibrant, luminous awareness

Ain Bailey: Thank you, Kendra

Kendra Coupland: Thank you so much for creating the space for the conversation

Ain Bailey: Yeah. Thank you for the practice. I would love to know before we shift to our sacred shout-out if there's anything else you would like to share to close out the conversation. Share, say, notice, wonder.

Kendra Coupland: I mean, I think the main thing is just I would encourage people to, to not rush to fill the silence or to fill the gaps or to fill those transitional spaces where things feel chaotic and try to immediately stabilize them or put the next thing in there. Because I think that's the difference between trying to, like, control emergence and participating in emergence

Ain Bailey: That's a lovely distinction

[Sacred Shoutout] Ain Bailey: I would like to invite you, Kendra, to share your sacred shout-out. So this is what is a person, place, or thing that is bringing you awe, inspiration, gratitude, or wonder these days?

Kendra Coupland: Right now it's my husband Brad, who is like being married to the Dalai Lama. He's so chill. Listen, I'm big energy all the time. I'm like living with a hurricane, and this guy is a calm pond all the time. And so his ability to space hold when I'm in transition, or I'm in flux, or I'm holding many people, his ability to be a solid foundation, I'm in awe of that. You know? His ability to just listen or go really slow, as much as I preach it, he's so good at it. So I really feel so much gratitude to be able to witness him in that, and to learn from him in that

Ain Bailey: Beautiful. Shout out, Brad. My sacred shout-out is Star Trek, and I was going back and forth of whether, but you lifted it up and gave me permission to just share my love of Star Trek. I am a Trekkie, uh, although just in the last four or five years. And what I love about it, and again, it's not perfect 'cause it's written by us in the present day, so it struggles with some things, but it is about a society that's beyond capitalism, beyond racism, beyond so many of the isms that I find just truly tedious, and then also we know often fatal.

And so that just gives me a lot of joy to be spending time with folks and stories and characters and just perspectives and worldviews in a society that has evolved enough to recognize its interconnectedness and then is able to do what is my deep heart's desire, which is be invited into the galactic community and be able to access different kinds of wisdom, different kinds of ways of living and being throughout the universe.

And so, and then as you named before, replicators, right? Whatever you want, you just ask for it, and it comes out of the replicator, and you eat it. And I just am a person who does not ever wanna cook. And so I'm also delighted by the fact that they are able to have this technology that is just like, "Hey, don't worry about your sustenance. It's cared for. You can be really engaged in exploration and discovery and sort of working in collaboration with others who are seeking to know and learn and discover." And so that's my shout-out to Star Trek. Thank you.

[Guest Bio] Kendra Coupland: So I'm Kendra Copeland. I'm a Black queer neurodivergent yoga grandmaster who works to bridge personal healing and collective liberation, and I love to support activists. I support caregivers, change makers who are recovering from burnout through decolonized body-centered practices that are rooted in non-dual tantra. And one of the things I really love to emphasize is bodily sovereignty and imagining the body as a gateway to healing and self-liberation

Ain Bailey: Beautiful. Kendra, is there anything you wanna share with us about who you are as just a person in the world? I always like to add a little bit of our whole beingness

Kendra Coupland: Yeah. It's one of those questions I have a hard time with because it's like people ask you where are you from and I want to be like, "The Big Bang,"

Ain Bailey: Uh-huh. Yes. That, you can say that though. This is the podcast for you to say that. Yes.

Kendra Coupland: Yeah. I am the formless and a temporary form. I know I'm gonna- I'm having a good time right now in this form

Ain Bailey: Kendra, thank you so much for being here. It's been a joy to be in conversation with you and exploration, and I'm excited for folks to get to hear this conversation. But I just want to give you a lot of gratitude

Kendra Coupland: Thank you so much. And again, thank you for this beautiful space, for New Seneca Village, for your dreams and your imaginings, which it's been so beautiful to watch them fruit into what they are becoming. So thank you so much for dreaming big.

[Static Outro] Ain Bailey: You've been listening to We Outside. I'm creator and host, Ainie B. This show grows from questions at the heart of my work. What nourishes and sustains the people carrying change? How do spirit, nature, community, and restorative strategy deepen the ways we lead, live, vision, and create what comes next? These questions also guide the offerings at my org, New Seneca Village, where we design restorative residencies and generative learning spaces for leaders and healers to step out of the urgency and to reconnect with the intangibles that expand their capacity to call in a collective future worth having.

Keep the conversation going with us on Instagram or LinkedIn. Tell us what sparked something for you, what questions you're carrying, and what you wanna hear more or less of. We Outside is edited by Podglomerate. Learn more at newsenecavillage.org/weoutside