

Heather Vickery 0:03

This is Heather Vickery and you're listening to The Brave Files, stories from people living courageously. When we choose bravely in big and small ways, it powerfully elevates our lives. I hope these stories connect with you and encourage you to embrace bravery in every possible way, day after day. Together, we could build a movement of courageous living that enriches both our lives and our communities. And if you enjoy the show, I asked you to please share it with others. Maybe think of someone who you want to choose bravely right alongside you. Thanks for tuning in. Now, here's the show. Well, hi, everybody. This is Heather Vickery. And you've tuned in to this week's episode of The Brave Files Podcast. I am so excited to have you here with us today. Here in the United States, it's Thanksgiving. And before I get started on my very first ever solo episode of The Brave Files Podcast, I just want to let you know about an exciting event that I have coming up that I'm really delighted to have the opportunity to share with you. Starting December 8, I invite you to join me for the Brave Method Workshop. This is a space where we will discover a powerful five-part method that I have created called the Brave Method that will help you build the groundwork to unlock a bolder, happier, and more fulfilling life. It's totally free, but you do have to register to attend. And if you're ready to make the brave leap, then let's do it. Together, we will meet in person for a live training every day from December 8 through December 17. At 1:30 pm Central, I will break down the Brave Method. Go over every element of that with you. Help you lean into your brave, set boundaries, get accountable, create an intentional plan, and get to work, we will have some special closed-door zoom sessions. For those of you who are really interested in digging in, we're going to have some fireside chats and some coffee chats on each individual topic. There's a detailed workbook that you get for free. If you show up, and you do the hard work - and let's just be clear on this - you're showing up for you, friends, not for me. For you. This is a chance to show up for you, leverage your fear into intentional bravery and decide that 2021 is going to be a year that you can master. All you have to do is register at VickeryandCo.com. Again, head on over to VickeryandCo.com. Register for the Brave Method Workshop. Mark your calendar and I will see you there.

Today is Thanksgiving here in the United States. And it's a time of year where people finally focus on what they're most grateful for. I always wish folks wouldn't wait until November to express gratitude because it's so impactful on a daily basis. Gosh, I even wrote two books about why and how it is so important to have gratitude in our daily lives. Normally, we have a special episode dedicated specifically to gratitude that airs on Thanksgiving, all of you lovely listeners call in and you share what you're most grateful for from the past year. And our talented audio engineer Andrew turns those calls into a really special episode. But this year, we decided to do something a little different this year, because hell, it's 2020, we're doing the gratitude episode next year. It seemed like we were all really ready for a fresh start and a gratitude episode is the perfect way to bring in the new year. So don't worry, we are 100% doing our gratitude episode, we will give you the opportunity to start calling in and sharing what you're most grateful for starting early December. But since we weren't doing our traditional episode, and I sat down and I wondered what should we air for Thanksgiving, I thought about the interviews we have lined up and while I love all of them, none of them quite seemed to fit the bill. And then a couple of weeks ago, I was walking in an early fall snowstorm with a friend and we noticed the snow

collecting and all of the beautiful fall leaves. The trees were all still full of leaves because it was too early in the season for them to have fallen. And it reminded me of something that I'd learned from my daughter Eve several years ago, a topic that she had talked about at school. And I turned to my friend and I said, "Hey, did you know that the color of the leaves in the fall is their natural color?" To my delight, she didn't already know this and was as fascinated by the discovery as I was when my kiddos shared it with me all those years ago. "Yeah," I said, "the reason leaves are green in the spring and summer is because of all the chlorophyll in them. But once it gets cold, they lose their chlorophyll and their true colors appear". So here's a fun little fact about me. I don't actually like fall, okay, okay. I get it. You could stop with your shock and awe right now. I know it makes me a little strange, people completely lose their minds when they discover I'm not into sweaters and scarves and boots. The Fall always just makes me feel really sad. I'm a spring lover. When everything comes back to life, in the fall, everything is dying. And it hurts my heart to watch everything die. But as we continue to walk, I started to think about the concept of radical authenticity and true colors. I started thinking about nature in general, and specifically the nature of human life. The trees become the truest version of themselves as they stop depending on an outside source to fuel them. And as they are nearing the end of their own lives. They're becoming the truest, most authentic, and vulnerable version of themselves. And it is breathtakingly brilliant. I've at least been able to appreciate the beauty of fall, even if fall has always made me sad. I've always wanted to go down a rabbit hole of learning. And when I first found out about the fall leaves, I knew I had to dig even deeper. If trees behave this way, do other living things do it also? Is this something that humans experience as well? I had an overwhelming urge to check in with Alua. Arthur. She's a death doula that I interviewed back in December 2018. If you want to check it out, it's Episode 40 called, "Death brought me back to life." And you really should listen to it. It is an incredible conversation that I realized there's so much grace and beauty and death from that conversation with Alua. It is in fact, as she says in my interview with her, "The only thing we can ever know for sure. That we will die." So as this little bit of knowledge about trees started taking root in my mind, I asked Alua about it. Did she see a correlation between the natural phenomenon of leaves and the end of human life? Once again, this kind-hearted, stunningly beautiful woman knew just what to say, to make the natural flow of life feel magical and beautiful rather than like a sad ending as I had always associated with fall. Alua sent me this beautiful message she said, 'As a flower smell strongest at the end of life and leaves turn magnificent colors just before they fall. Humans have the capacity to become our fullest, richest, most pungent sells just before death. We must choose to not let the fear of impending death impede our most ripe time.'

We must choose, Alua said. And so it seems, we must, because we will die. And we will become the truest version of ourselves in that process. And in choosing to allow that authenticity to shine. We're experiencing our bravest moments. But this is not an episode about death. This is an episode about radical authenticity. This is an episode about your true colors. And as I began to wonder, does life have to be like this? How is it that we as a species are so advanced in so many ways, and so unadvanced in the ways of being the best versions of ourselves possible? Did we have to wait until the end of our lives? To be the bravest? To be the most authentic? Can we change this? Is there a way to show up in the world with honesty, integrity, and truth right now at this moment rather than waiting for death? Well, for me friends,

the answer is an emphatic Yes. I call it being radically authentic. And it's at the heart of my entire business. It's even the heart of my coaching platform, which is called The Brave Method, I mentioned to you we're doing a workshop on The Brave Method coming up soon. It's the heart of this podcast because I don't believe you can actually practice and be successful unless you embrace the concept of being radically authentic. The Brave Method calls upon us to look at ourselves and our lives from the most honest lens possible, to set boundaries, to sit in our mistakes and lessons, to admit fault, to ask for help and do the hard work. Nothing is more radically authentic than that. When I think of those that have stepped into radical authenticity at the end of life, I always think of my maternal grandmother, my granny. I had a very close-knit family growing up, my granny was only 35 when I was born, and although I always adored her, I didn't always agree with her. In fact, I would say we most often didn't agree on most major issues. She was riddled with faults, just like the rest of us. It took me a long time to realize that we all have faults. But I loved her hard. And I always knew that she loved me. She didn't actually have to tell me she loved me because she was one of those people that always showed up. She showed me that she loved me by showing up in all ways, and at all times as I was growing up. I certainly didn't appreciate it the way I should have when I was younger. This is a regret I will always have. But it's, it's one that I think many young people face. Life seems so full and we often overlook something as seemingly simple as a grandparent or even a parent. We take it for granted, we think they'll always be around. We don't realize how valuable they are sometimes until we don't have them anymore. I knew growing up that my granny and I were on different ends of the moral compass on things like racism and homophobia, although we were shockingly aligned when it came to women's rights. I've been active in anti-racism work since before I knew it was a thing and I've never been afraid to speak the truth or butt heads with somebody. My mom says I used to rule from the highchair. But even with my strong will and my loud mouth, I knew that coming out to my granny was going to be one of the hardest things I ever did in my life. But I'd come out to everyone else. And finally, it became abundantly clear that I had to come out to her because the rest of the family knew and it was time. But I felt so much dread. In fact, my mother wanted to be the one to tell her. I'm not exactly sure why perhaps in an effort to protect me from an emotional harm that she anticipated. Or maybe it was so that she could control the narrative. In any case, it doesn't matter because granny wasn't having it. She wanted to hear the truth from me. And she wasn't going to rest until she did. I remember that phone call so well. Seeing her number come up on the caller ID, that familiar feeling of heat rising up in my neck, the bile collecting in my throat. But this was the moment of truth. And it was time to step into my brave on this situation. So I answered the phone. She asked me what I had to tell her and I spit it out pretty quickly. I practiced my coming out story plenty of times at this point. So I was well prepared if terrified. But by the grace of having never lived her own perfect life, my granny was kind and loving through that conversation.

In the end, all she really said was, "Well baby, you're mine. And I love you. And I always will." Granny was kind and welcoming to my partner when they were introduced. But she mostly kept her words and our thoughts to herself on the matter of my gayness. Of course, I never asked her about it, I was just relieved and happy living my truth. And I was too focused on just getting by and not rocking the boat to care what anyone else was thinking. And yet there was this nagging sensation in my heart, that she was disappointed in me, that I'd let her down by being a

lesbian. And then she got sick. Remember when I told you that granny was only 35 when I was born, right, so she was too young to be so sick that she was dying. I wasn't prepared, and it seemed so unfair. I also knew that she didn't want to die. She wasn't ready. But life does what it wants. And the only control we have over it is how we move through it. And as the weeks turned into months, it became more and more apparent that granny wasn't going to survive this illness. She was a tiny shell of the powerhouse woman, the attention-demanding woman that she had always been. I did my best to call weekly and check in on her. And we didn't talk long because I knew it took too much out of her. But I wanted her to know that I loved her and that I was there for her and that she was on my mind and in my heart.

The last conversation I ever had with granny ended up being one of the most extraordinarily wonderful conversations of my entire life. Just as we were about to hang up the phone, she said, "Heather," "Yeah," I responded. "I hope you know how proud I am of you. What you did couldn't have been easy. And I just needed you to know that you're the strongest person that I have ever met and I am so proud of you." Through my tears, I thanked her. By doing the honest, hard thing and showing up in the world with radical authenticity, I had actually made her proud. She wasn't disappointed in me. She was proud. And a week later, she was gone. I often wish I'd had a little more time with that version of granny. Or maybe I wish I'd had more time with her knowing she was not in fact disappointed in me, but rather, she was proud of me. If only I had trusted myself enough to have a conversation like this one earlier, if I had initiated it, maybe we could have spent time and honesty, laughter, and relaxed joy together.

So after I finished that walk in the fall, in the snow, I really started to think that my granny was like the fall leaves in the end, brilliant, bold, beautiful. She no longer cared what the world told her to care about. She cared only about what was in her heart. And that heart centeredness allowed her to give me the best gift I have ever received. The best gift I could ever receive. There's always more work to be done when it comes to radical authenticity. It's something that we have to work hard every day to embody. But you have everything you need inside of you to be radically authentic to let your true colors shine through. And trust me, friend, the world will bask in your beautiful brilliance. So today, this day, Thanksgiving, 2020. And tomorrow, and next week, next month, and next year, I asked you how can you be the boldest, most beautiful, brilliant version of yourself right now? How can you choose to step into your brave and live authentically, instead of being afraid? Instead of waiting until the end when you don't have control over the dialogue any more? How can you choose bravely to be radically authentic? I know it's in you. I see it in you. I feel it around you. And I am here to help you shine. Happy Thanksgiving friends.

I am beyond grateful for you, and the gifts of this podcast, and the gifts of brave and the gifts of gratitude. I hope you'll join me for the Brave Method Workshop starting December 8. I hope that you will start a gratitude practice. I hope that you will choose radical authenticity every moment of every day. Starting right now. Thanks for tuning in. This is Heather Vickery reminding you today and every day to go out and choose bravely.

Hey, friends, I want to share something really exciting with you. We already know you enjoy listening to podcasts because you're listening to this one but I'm also betting you enjoy audiobooks. And hey, listen, if you don't already enjoy audiobooks, then it's time to check them out. That's why I'm really excited to share libro.fm with you. They are an incredible new platform for listening to audiobooks. And by choosing libro FM over other audiobook services, you are supporting a local bookstore of your choice and investing in your local community. Libro.fm offers over 150,000 audiobooks via their primary platform, which by the way, they built with love and from scratch because they're a small business also. They even offer bookseller recommendations for great audiobook options. You can sign up right now via www.VickeryandCo.com/librofm, that's [VickeryandCo.com/librofm](http://www.VickeryandCo.com/librofm). And when you do, you'll get one free audiobook of your choice. And the proceeds will go to your favorite local bookstore. Now check what I just said there, you're going to get a free book and the proceeds are still going to go to your local bookstore because at least libro FM makes sure that their booksellers get paid even when they give a promo to customers. I've listened to over 20 audiobooks this year alone. I especially love listening to memoirs read by the author. And it feels great knowing that all of my purchases support my local bookstore, The Book Table in Oak Park, Illinois. Libro.fm, the same audiobooks, the same price, but a completely different story. Check them out right now at VickeryandCo.com/librofm.

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