

The Brave Files Podcast

Ronit Plank: A Journey of Resilience and Reconciliation

Episode 170

Heather Vickery 00:00

Hi out there. This is Heather Vickery and you've tuned in to The Brave Files Podcast. Welcome. I'm so happy to have you here with us today. I'm curious, how many of you out there feel like there's a story inside of you? Maybe that story could help others? Do you ever wonder that? Or that perhaps in the telling of your own story, you might find healing for yourself that can then transfer to others or maybe not? Well, that's exactly what happened to my friend and fellow podcaster, Ronit Plank. Ronit tells me that she never intended to write a memoir. But as a professional writer, she realized that her own personal story was too important to keep to herself. Her recently published memoir, which is called *When She Comes Back*, is riveting and powerful. I personally listened to it on audiobook because I love Ronit's peaceful and comforting voice, there's really a cadence and a rhythm to it that almost felt meditative to me. And I learned so much from my interview with Ronit that I can't wait to share it with you. Her personal brave journey offers so many insights if you look for them, that can help you connect with your own ways to step bravely into the world. Tuck fear in your pocket, and take it with you and go out and do brave things. So I'm really excited to share this one with you. Let's get started.

Ronit Plank 1:34

Hope, change, courage.

Heather Vickery 1:38

This is Heather Vickery. And you're listening to The Brave Files, stories from people living courageously. When we choose bravely and 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 can 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. Oh, y'all today I am really excited to be talking to the amazing Ronit Plank. Ronit is a writer and a fellow podcaster. But she's also a little girl who was abandoned by her mother at the age of six. And then she became a surrogate caregiver for the rest of her family and grappling with this. And understanding her own self worth has become a life goal. Her story is one of resilience and eventually reconciliation. rejection from the most important person in her life ultimately led to a deep commitment and love her own children and helping other people overcome obstacles like this. Ronit is a friend of mine, and I'm so excited to have you here. Welcome to The Brave Files.

Ronit Plank 3:04

Oh, I'm so glad to be here. Heather. I've been really looking forward to it. And it's it's so exciting because you're one of the first podcast I ever encountered when I began podcasting myself.

Heather Vickery 3:14

Yay. Thank you. Well, that's it. This is I was gonna say this much later, but I had the privilege of being a guest on your show. It feels like a long time ago.

Ronit Plank 3:23

I know. I know. I don't think it was I don't even think it was a year ago. But you were on episode 47, which I titled A coming out and into power story. And I just love talking with you. You You had a story that I had not had on the podcast yet. And I was so glad that you were my guest.

Heather Vickery 3:40

Oh, thank you. Yeah, well, I'm glad that we're turning the tables now. And I get to have you here with us. So let's let's start at the beginning with we all know, because I just said that your mom left when you were only six. And I'm curious, before that, do you remember what life was like before that? How are your memories strong? Because I don't have any memories of being little so. Yeah, yeah. I'd love to hear what it was like before the bottom fell out.

Ronit Plank 4:06

Yeah, yeah. So, you know, for me, it was a very different experience because I was born in Israel. My parents are American. They're New York Jews. And they went to Israel to make Alia which is basically re basically like becoming a citizen and making your life in Israel. And it's sort of a goal of a lot of Jews. And this was in the late 60s and 70s when there's a lot of idealism going along. And you know, they kind of dropped out of American culture for those eight years. And so they had me and my sister, she's about two and a half years younger. And, you know, my first four years were on this communal work farm, called a kibbutz, which it was in the south of Israel in bear Sheva, near the Negev desert. And it was everyone collectively worked and everyone had a small place to live and the children were raised in a children's house. We didn't even sleep with our parents after six weeks. Yeah, and So I, I basically saw my parents two or three hours a day, every afternoon on the lawn along with the other children. And that was supposed to be dedicated time for parent visits. And you otherwise were taken care of by women carers who lived in the house and slept there with you and your group of kids the same age. And so it's hard to piece apart what are my actual memories? Yeah, I know, I know. You want to dig in. But it's hard to answer. I know, you're like, let's go. I Yeah, well, it's hard to piece it apart what are my original memories? And what come from photos that I've spent my whole life looking at. But I will tell you, it seems that I was confident, I was free. I felt supported. I knew where everyone was, I understood what my role was, I was a bonafide kid. And my parents were there. But in some, in some sense. I mean, I adored them, but they were more dispensable because there was so many other people around. And so when we moved to Seattle, when I was about four, and then things started falling apart, you know, they got divorced about when I was four and a half or five, everything the cracks just started getting, you know, bigger and deeper. And not only was I moved from this kind of cradle of a society where I'd grown up and a language Hebrew that I knew. I also found myself dependent entirely on two people who were falling apart, and who didn't really know how to parent on their own, without a whole group.

Heather Vickery

Yeah, that's what I'm sitting here thinking like, Oh, my God, they didn't know how to take care of you. They didn't know how to be parents. Whoa, okay. Wow, this is now like, I knew a lot about you, but I somehow did not know this. Um, what is the, what is the purpose of a community like that? And I can hear, it almost sounds like the like the universe in some bizarre way had your back a little in prepping you for not having a present parent like.

Hmm, that's a good way of thinking about it. Um, you know, so this was a socialist communal work farm, and each Kibbutz had a job. Some were factory, some were farming. My mom worked in the kitchen, my dad worked in the fields and then with the animals, and the idea was to be really productive and to support each other. And to not have to worry about paying for things or having disparity in economic levels.

Heather Vickery 7:17

Okay, but why not care for your children, at least at night. I can see during the day, of course, I understand daycare, Sure, but why not? Yeah.

Ronit Plank 7:26

Okay, so to speak to what I do understand about it was it was to free up both the women and the men to make it equal. So the idea was a on the side of the fathers. My dad told me that they believed on the kibbutz that the dads on the kibbutz got to see their children far more than dads who worked in the city because they had this bonafide couple of hours every day. The The idea was to free up the mom. So there was more of like, gender equality, so that the moms weren't stuck at home raising children. Now, you know, I'm sure there have been a lot of books and published in Israel about this. And I've mentioned this on other shows before, but I will say that when we went back as a family, me and my husband and my two children, about two or three years ago, we had one tour guide, who was telling us about keep at SIEM, which is plural for Kibbutz and the kibbutzniks, which are the people who live on a kibbutz and he said, you know, no offense, basically in his broken English, but they all need a little bit of therapy. Because I actually, when you think about attachment, which I didn't know much about until I was a mom myself, think about all the attachment repercussions for not being able to sleep near your parents.

Heather Vickery 8:29

Huge abandonment issues. I mean, I can appreciate understanding or wanting to change that Gender Equality, I can certainly appreciate that. But yeah, caregiving for I feel like there might be some other ways to do that. Although, you know,

Ronit Plank 8:50

People are really surprised by that part of the story. I grew up hearing these stories my whole life about how in a way idyllic the kibbutz was. My father always reminisced about it. And I never really stopped and thought about it on my own terms as the person I am now, until the last five or seven years and writing the book and stuff where I was like, wait a minute, and also had my own children.

Heather Vickery 9:10

Yeah. Can you imagine not ever caring for your children?

Ronit Plank 9:16

Totally Yeah, exactly.

Heather Vickery 9:17

Yeah. Oh, my gosh. Okay. Well, so then what prompted the move to the States? Why did they leave it?

Ronit Plank 9:24

Yeah, that's a good question. I think what I hear from both of them, and you know, their memory is fuzzy. And also, you know, I think as a memoirist, and as just a writer, I've noticed how much our memory is faulty, like, you think that you know something down to the down to the bones. But if you check it with somebody else, they'll have a different memory, right. So it's very, very changeable, and malleable, but the idea is that they talked back and forth about going back a lot. And they did leave at one point before I was born, tried to settle in Brooklyn came back, they just didn't know what they were doing. I mean, she was 20 when they got married, and she was 24 when she had me, which is you know, not that young, by those standards, but still young. And you know, a side note, too is that both of them came from childhoods, and families that were distressed and not supportive, which is not too uncommon, especially back in the day. But they really didn't have a blueprint. And so I think he eventually they decided to come back to the States because he got a position in the grad school at University of Washington, he was going to finish his English degree and teach, and they settled on Seattle. And I think, you know, I think it was hard because my mom was a really social woman. She relied on that community. And, you know, it was really difficult of a transition when they came back.

Heather Vickery 10:37

Yeah, I imagine. It's very challenging. And it also isn't surprising to hear that they were craving something, some structure, some guidance.

Ronit Plank 10:46

Well, I think also, you know, so my dad will always reminisce even to this day about how amazing the kibbutz was, and we'll all kind of look at him and say, you never really liked it that much. You know, I think he wanted to tame the land and be this Jewish pioneer. But I think my mom will tell me that socially and the crowds and the rules and the equal ground that the kibbutz expected of everyone didn't appeal to him. Whereas my mom was out almost every night doing sketch and improv and playing, you know, hanging out with friends like it was her millou.

Heather Vickery 11:17

Yeah. Well, it really isn't any wonder that she was seeking some sort of version of that and could not cope, right, so she, share with everybody. Okay, why she left and where she went.

Ronit Plank 11:29

Okay, so and this is in the book. And so I'll give you the cliffnotes. But basically, this is another part of the story that and I think people who have unpacked their childhoods will appreciate this. My whole life I felt that the story was my mom left, period, my dad wouldn't talk about it. But actually here is the bombshell, he left first, because he left the family first to move to New Jersey and left me and my sister and my mom in Seattle. And he moved out there for a job and to live with a woman and her two daughters and basically start this other family.

Heather Vickery 12:01

Oh Shit.

Ronit Plank 12:01

Yeah. So then like a year later, you know what, he's gone. She has no real resources. No family. We're on food stamps. She didn't even know how to write a check. And she's raising us doing her best, feeling sick or depressed or maybe dealing with fibromyalgia, we don't know. And her friend says, Hey, you should really look at this, this teacher. His name is Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. She starts listening to tapes, she starts reading his books. She starts bringing us to meditations with a lot of other adults and, you know, she's gone very inward, she's not accessible. She doesn't seem happy, she's angry. And she's alone. And this becomes sort of a resource for her and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is the guru that the wild wild country docu series on Netflix was about.

Heather Vickery 12:47

Oh, wow. Cool. I mean, terrible. Strange. It is. It is odd. And they he taught that children were a hindrance, right?

Ronit Plank 12:59

Yeah.

Heather Vickery 12:59

You don't want your kids around?

Ronit Plank 13:01

And I didn't know that at the time. But he was also known Heather, I don't know if you know this, but it wasn't until I was in counseling later in years that I found out he was known as the sex guru. did you know that?

Heather Vickery 13:12

No, but what the, of course it's not surprising.

Ronit Plank 13:15

And and I do go into a little bit of history in my book, but and I'll save the listeners too much of the detail because I don't want to get too stuck in it. But essentially, he encouraged Bhagwan encouraged sterilization and vasectomy. You know what I always think about if he really had

everyone do that, how would he have new followers like what was the plan? And also, this is another funny thing too funny, strange, so sad and weird. Toward the end of his time, in his second ashram, which was in antelope, Oregon, he sat in a literal dentist's chair on stage and sucked nitrous oxide while he lectured.

Heather Vickery 13:54

So, yeah.

Ronit Plank 13:59

96 Rolls Royces.

Heather Vickery 14:01

Well right those things together, right? The eccentric, they're wealthy, the people who blindly follow people like that.

Ronit Plank 14:11

But you know what? I'm interrupting you this? This is a funny thing. And I didn't get into it too much. I don't talk about it too much, because I don't have the energy to unpack it. But I think that he I said unpack before so excuse my redundance but he would say, I have these 96 Rolls Royces because I'm trying to basically mock and highlight how ridiculous western culture is.

Heather Vickery 14:33

Lies. Lies, lies, lies. Yeah. You know, I personally cannot understand that level of blind faith in something that just feels so obviously fake, fake and fucked up from my perspective, but what I from all of the, you know, 170 people I've had on this show, and there have been a lot of people who have certainly not your story, but some experience with cults, or some experience with things like that. What I hear pretty consistently is the folks who fall into that are just craving something, to love them and something to be theirs, and maybe some structure and some guidance, tell me what to do. Because I wonder for your mom, and of course, it's her story and not yours. But this. Just tell me what to do. Because I don't know how to do this.

Ronit Plank 15:26

Yeah, I mean, and of course, if you've never been parented properly, which was the case for her, how, yes, of course, like, so the thing is, she was given a lot of responsibility as a kid, she was the, she was the middle child. But the first girl, she took care of a lot of stuff. Her mom was verbally and I think physically abusive. And she did so much and got very little anything physical or emotional back. And her mom never told her she loved her. I don't think her mom ever gave her a hug, actually.

Heather Vickery 15:55

Oh that's heartbreaking.

Ronit Plank 15:56

Yes. And so then you've got this woman who is trying to create a life with somebody else, who never got any kind of nurturing. And so and then she was put in charge of a lot of things. And then I kind of followed in her footsteps, because once she was gone, I ended up taking care of my sister and my father's household. And you know, . Well, yeah, by the time so, so cut to basically and you can stop me and have me go back if you want. But I eventually my mom dropped us off in, in New Jersey, with my father on the way to go to India. And my father and me and my sister and his girlfriend and her two daughters who were teenagers lived together for about a year. It was only supposed to be the summer but then my, my mom basically said I'm not coming back. And so we stayed, I stayed there for second grade. And, and then my dad ended up moving me and my sister out to Queens, flushing queens for an apartment, just the three of us because my mom had come back for her, her mom who was sick with cancer, but she wasn't ready to take us. And so my dad started our new life of three in Flushing, Queens. And, you know, my dad was great that way, because he really wanted us to feel that he wanted us and that he loved us. And it was the three of us against the world. But it wasn't it didn't end up being perfect. Of course, you know,

Heather Vickery 17:15

Yeah. Yeah, all of that. So I have a second grader right now. She's my youngest. She's the youngest of four. So she is the epitome of the baby of the family. And when I think of how little she is, how young and tiny I mean, she's also clever and smart and brilliant, but to imagine a second grader taking on that level of responsibility. And did you feel consciously aware at that time of being unwanted or abandoned?

Ronit Plank 17:52

So that is a good question. Because I think that, and I identified this a lot in writing the book because, you know, you have this, as I mentioned, before you have the story, you know, or you think is accurate. And then as time goes by, you can go back and figure out is this really true? What do I think about this? And that's part of the joy and also the pain of writing memoir, but I think that for me, I just went ahead with it. What was I supposed to do? When you're a kid, unless, unless you have a total breakdown and collapse, which I'm sure happens. First of all, I was a pretty precocious and and strong like, I had a lot of resilience as a kid, I was not a gushy person, necessarily. And so I just assumed I was supposed to do all this. There was no question and I did wait for my mom to call from India when she said she would and she didn't. I did wait for her. I was waiting for her to come back. Because for me, she was my, my main she was the mothership, you know, she was. And so my whole early, you know, those early years was defined by waiting for her to come back. And I thought things would continue. If you had told me at second grade, and then third grade when we moved to Queens together, that what was going to unfold over the next years. I mean, I don't know what I would have been able to handle because luckily you don't know what's about to happen in your life.

Heather Vickery 19:06

You just deal with the here and now.

Ronit Plank 19:07

Yeah, I missed her. But for the first couple years with my dad, I was still really young. And it was fun. It was an adventure. We were in a holding pattern. But when I started getting into adolescence, and I'd been the mother of the house and the partner for too long, and his boundaries weren't so great. I really started to cringe and back away from that role.

Heather Vickery 19:27

Of course. And when you say his boundaries weren't so great, what are you saying?

Ronit Plank 19:31

Well, nothing physical ever happened between me and my father, but I feel that his conversation with me crossed the line sometimes. And he depended on me for a lot of things like cooking dinner and cleaning and taking care of my sister. And sometimes he would, you know, kind of talk to me about his relationships. And, you know, he would comment on women that he saw on the TV and, you know, he was just very, very, you know, masculine. Very sexist. And, you know, it was just a Very male centered way to grow up, of course, right. And for the first couple years, it was fine. It was dad and us against the world, as I said, but then, you know, he became the parent that was always there. And my mom became the absent parent, which was the gift parent. So we wanted to see her, I wanted to be with her. And I offered her so much forgiveness, because we did start to see her on the weekends for a while before she left again. And being with her was what I wanted, right? She was, she was where I felt the most comfortable, I thought, but in writing the book, I realized, hmm, that was troublesome too, because she was not always there. Emotionally.

Heather Vickery 20:37

Of course. So if, if when you look back on all of this, what do you think really was your safe place? Was it just you? Was it your sister?

Ronit Plank 20:47

You know, I think that probably changed through the years, my mind was probably my safe place, my need to try to, like kind of figure things out and work them out in my head, I became sort of C-3PO in my mind, need to rationalize and figure things out. And I think I did some magical thinking, I did some tapping in three years in or not, I wouldn't say I had OCD, but I brushed my teeth extra long, like too, too long. 10 minutes at a time I'd you know, I'd like Tantra tap. Yeah, control control control, for sure. And, and also animals became a place where I could really express myself, we had a lot of animals, lots of cats and dog. And, you know, I, I just I honestly, I don't know that I was present very much. I think I was always ahead in my head trying to figure out how to feel better.

Heather Vickery 21:38

Is that something you've been able to change in your adult life? Are you able to be more present now? Or is that still struggle?

Ronit Plank 21:44

It's so much better. And I think that, you know, I went through different therapists as I got older, and I don't think I started working in the best possible way until about five years ago. And that therapist also helped me with some Lexapro. And I'm not ashamed or shy about that because, look, I have an anxious situation. I have a little bit of anxious relationship stuff happening, that and who knows how much is nature and who knows how much is nurture. And as I've talked to some of my fellow Jewish women friends, especially in the older generation, some of them say we've had so much inbreeding, that we're just anxious and neurotic anyway.

Heather Vickery 22:18

Well, that stuff is passed down.

Ronit Plank 22:21

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I mean, it's not a surprise. I mean, I'm neuro typical, as far as I know. But I definitely think that I have struggled with relational anxiety. And that Lexapro has helped me take the edge off, plus some very, very deep and hearty work by myself, like really, really coming to the table and with my husband, because we were both sort of lost. And we had to make a decision about eight or nine years ago about whether we were going to blow this whole thing up, or dig in. And we, we dug in, and I had to face all the stuff, all the stuff that I didn't want to face about myself.

Heather Vickery 23:00

Yeah, that's it. It's really fascinating to hear you say that. This unusual position, I'm in with one of my daughters, who is has experienced some trauma of her own and she's in this phase, and I'm curious to hear from you. How you relate to this? Well, she is just super fucking pissed off that because of somebody else's actions, she has to heal.

Ronit Plank 23:27

Yeah, well, okay. So I can speak to this, especially because, and I don't know if this will answer your question, cuz she's still young. But for me, I think I had this idea not. It was like, implicit in me, that maybe because I've been the victim in my family, and I'd been through so much. And I really want to be clear, I didn't think this aloud or say it to anyone, I think I operated this way. I felt that I was the good guy. Hey, you know, I went through all this stuff. I'm the good guy, perhaps. And that maybe I'd already done so much work, that I didn't have to do any more work. Right. And, and but I was defensive, and I didn't really know how to be vulnerable. And I know vulnerable is a hot button word these days or for the last couple of years.

Heather Vickery 24:07

It's good one though.

Ronit Plank 24:07

But it's really good. And and you know, and it's so is true, it was a revelation to learn that vulnerability is strength. And I have to stay on top of it because my easy comebacks are defensive. . And my I could again say, well, I've already done the work so I don't need to be

more vulnerable. But I need to settle myself down, sit myself down and like put my little Falcon hood on and just be like, shush up, really going on here and let's figure this out. Because that little scared bunny rabbit part of you wants to just jumping get away, right?

Heather Vickery 24:42

Sure. Yeah, absolutely. And I really think there's something to that when we feel the most need to be defensive and protective. is always the time to sit within yourself and get into your knowing and go wait, wait, wait, wait, what's actually happening, but that is, of course, a very mature approach. And I don't expect my kiddo to be the one to figure that out yet. And I, and I kind of just say to her, so for anybody listening, you know, yeah, you get to be really mad that you have to heal because somebody else did something shitty. You can be mad about that. It doesn't change the fact that you have to do the healing, but you're not going to do it until you're ready to do it. And I, I wonder for you was that when you decided to write your memoir, it's time to heal.

Ronit Plank 25:29

Yeah, so and I also want to you just reminded me of something when you said that, and that this might be helpful to your daughter, though, she may already know this, which part of the healing for me came it was sort of a multi prong thing. But part of it happened when I realized this didn't have anything to do with me. And that took me really, really long time. Because, you know, you could think, well, if I was a different kid, or if I had done something different, that was my early early belief, right, then maybe my mom would have left, that was my early belief, which is absurd. As a mom, you know, to think that like, now that I'm a mom of absurd, although I'm maybe there are some people who would take off if their kid was really hard, you know, I get that. But um, you know, as a mom, you're supposed to stay. And so if your mom can't stay, what does that mean? And so for me, writing the book, what happened was, I used to act, I was an actor first and a marketer, I used to sell and act. That's what I did. And then I taught. And then I started writing, when my second child was born, my boy. And I started writing fiction, I took some classes at the University of Washington, I started publishing short fiction, but a lot of these stories, which will be out next year, in a different book, they had this idea of alienation, losing power, not knowing where you belong, you know, loneliness in them. Not to say a lot of other fiction doesn't have that. Because fiction writers, we work on this stuff a lot. But then I realized, ha, I am really trying to say something. And so some nonfiction essays started popping out, I switched to nonfiction and some of these essays started popping out. And I started publishing nonfiction and memoir essays. But I still felt memoir was sort of like a dirty word. I felt memoir was navel gazing, I felt it was sort of self congratulatory, and kind of wallowing. And then I went to grad school, and I switched to memoir, and I understood it as something totally different. And that it is a search for the memoirist to figure out why they behave the way they did when they did and what they think about it now. And I've drafted the full manuscript probably in 2016, and then worked on it and revised it over the years. And goodness, you know, I got the publishing deal a year ago. So it takes a long time. And again, if you told me in 2016, that I wouldn't have the book out till 2021. I'd be like, forget it. I'm out. Like, I'm very impatient.

Heather Vickery 27:49

Absolutely. That is a long time. It's also hard to write a book, any book, and it's really hard to write a memoir. And it's essentially like sort of turning yourself inside out in the name of of healing and growing for yourself, and then helping others do the same. Right? I feel like Otherwise, why do we tell our stories?

Ronit Plank 28:09

Yes, yes. And I think that a lot of people will say that one of the main reasons they write is well, of course, to excavate it for themselves. But also, there's this knowing that if it's helped somebody else feel less alone, or help somebody feel seen, then it's very worth it.

Heather Vickery 28:24

Absolutely. Well go ahead and tell everybody, we use we've talked about the book, what the name of the book is, where they can get the book.

Ronit Plank 28:30

Yeah, yeah. So the book is called When she Comes Back, and it's available wherever you get your books. Of course you can get it at my website, there's RonitPlank.com and I know you'll tag all that. But my book is available on the in the all the big stores and all the tiny stores and if your little store doesn't have it you can just say can you please get that?

Heather Vickery 28:48

Yeah, I love ordering from my independent bookstore, they can get you anything you want. Shout out to The Book Table.

Ronit Plank 28:54

Yes. And I should mention it's in Kindle audio book, which I narrated. And it's on hardback and also paperback.

Heather Vickery 29:02

Oh my gosh, I love that you just said that. So we one of our show sponsors is libro.fm, which is a competitor of audible and so when you get an audiobook from libro.fm, and if you you want a free one, I was not intending to plug this now but if you want to go to Vickeryandco.com/librofm and you'll get a free book. You can get Ronit's audio book there. I love listening to memoirs on audio. That's almost the only thing I listened to on audio. So I'm gonna go right and get it right now.

Ronit Plank 29:36

Yes. And I promise I didn't produce it myself. I had somebody else produce it. So it's actually directed and produced. I'm a very quick talker. And I think that I would have what what what did she say when we were recording? She had to stop me several times. Because you said you just went off the mountain. You just fell off the mountain. You're like, and then I went to the store or whatever. And then before you know it, you've like speeded up the entire delivery.

Heather Vickery 29:57

Well, my love I think you need to stop apologizing for yourself. Just little tiny thing up there out there, because I think you're amazing. And one of the questions that I have for you, first of all, congratulations, I think any audio book that's a, it's a lot of work. It's exceptional. And also, you are one of the very few people that I know, who didn't Self Publish.

Ronit Plank 30:20

Yeah, I guess a lot of people do Self Publish. And I am friends with a whole bunch of writers right now. And I do have a small publisher Motina books took this on, and I really, I'm just so glad it's out in the world now. And it was important for me to narrate it, because I do have some of that experience behind me in terms of voiceover and stuff. And I felt like maybe people would like to listen to it. It's only six hours of listening.

Heather Vickery 30:42

I am gonna listen to it. I think as soon as we're done.

Ronit Plank 30:46

Oh, I hope and please, then you'll have to tell me what you think of it. I'm so curious.

Heather Vickery 30:51

Of course. I know. I'm gonna love it. I love you. I love your show. I love your energy. Yeah, I'm super excited about it. I've clearly I think your your story is fascinating. One of the questions that I have for you is, how has your childhood experience shaped the type of parents that you are I know you are very different type of parents and your parents were? And so how has that shifted? And what's the level of consciousness there?

Ronit Plank 31:20

I think there was a lot of consciousness about it early on, because everything I did would recall, you know, as the kids got older, I could remember the times that I was their age. And so I had a lot of, you know, frustration and anger at my mom, when the kids were four and five and six, as you can imagine. But I am very careful about boundaries, which I think comes from my might the father side. Yeah, you know, trying to make sure they don't feel that I'm parental buying them, or leaning on them or objectifying them, or any of that I'm careful with what I share with them. I try to make sure that my husband is my partner, and they are my children. So that might also become me, kind of, you know, really like taking too solicitous care of them sometimes. So if my 15 and a half year old daughter shouts from her room, can I have some fruit Mom, I'm like, okay, honey, and I cut it up, and I bring it to her. Because fruit is love. Food is love. And of course, I'm going to give them food and take care of them. Even though my husband says sometimes, like, even two years ago, when my 13 and a half year old was 11 and a half. He said, You don't have to tie his shoes, honey. No, because you know, he had his hands full. And I did He's like, Oh my gosh, you baby that boy. But um, it's funny. And then the other thing I would say is that I always try to make sure they know how much I love them. And I think that the fact that my daughter sasses me a lot and my son gets to be a little snappy these days means, I think, they know I'm not going anywhere.

Heather Vickery 32:53

What a great way to think of that, for all of you who are fucking frustrated with your kids who don't listen, or they snap back, are they push back? It's really truly is a sign that they feel safe and comfortable.

Ronit Plank 33:06

I would never have done that with either of my parents. I didn't want to piss off my father as a teenager, because then who would I live with? And I didn't see my mom in any kind of way but idolized so I never would have ever done that. And so I didn't start snapping back at my mom until I was like in my 30s.

Heather Vickery 33:22

Wow,

Ronit Plank 33:22

When I felt safe.

Heather Vickery 33:23

Well, right because she couldn't hurt you anymore. . She didn't have any control anymore. What's your relationship like with your family now? Your parents, your sister, we haven't really talked about, are you close with your sister?

Ronit Plank 33:34

Yes, very close with my sister. She lives in California. And she has two sons. She's a great mom and we talk as much as we can. My father and mother come over every Friday night I your audience won't believe this for Shabbat dinner, which is the Jewish Sabbath dinner.

Heather Vickery 33:49

Together? They come together.?

Ronit Plank 33:50

Yes. My mom cooks, my stop it, it's in the book, I swear, my mom comes over and she brings groceries, you know, like we gave her a card, you know, buy these groceries, she makes dinner for us. And delicious cook. She was a cook on the kibbutz and she's an amazing cook. And my mom and I our relationship which we didn't talk about this, but we've gotten a lot closer because we both kind of got to this point of real honesty. And she sort of really accepted the responsibility for things which is great. My father comes he used to go back and forth from New York to Seattle a lot. But now he's been here since the pandemic and so we see them at least once a week and I'll tell you like clockwork, my father will bring up the kibbutz days, the kibbutz days, and I swear, we always we should just play a drinking game about it because we could be rich. I've every time if we just kind of bet on when he is going to bring up the kibbutz every Friday, every Friday and my mom didn't even like the kibbutz What are you talking about?

Heather Vickery 34:46

It just it does go to show that when we take the time to heal ourselves and then get honest and have hard conversations, the the absolutely seemingly impossible becomes possible.

Ronit Plank 34:59

It's true. And you know, I never was fully estranged from my mother. But our relationship deepened in the last years, the last few years, and we've had some serious conversations. She hasn't run away. And that is part of the watershed moment. You know, that's part of what enabled the healing to happen.

Heather Vickery 35:19

Absolutely. Has she apologized?

Ronit Plank 35:25

I feel like I should leave that as a cliffhanger for people to find in the book. Wouldn't that be smart?

Heather Vickery 35:31

Did you? Do you answer that question in the book?

Ronit Plank 35:34

Yeah.

Heather Vickery 35:36

All right, folks Ronit's not going to give you the answer. I mean, I think I'm gonna guess she has, I think it's pretty hard to heal, and to welcome and to trust, when somebody can't ever admit that their form of fault. But also, you know, that's deeply partnered with and you said this, at the very beginning of the conversation. When you shift the narrative from, I was abandoned by my mother to my mother is also a human being who was experiencing these things when we, when we stop making it all about us, even though it happened to us and we feel it about us and we start to go Wait, there are other factors at play. And if I can be a little bit empathetic to somebody else's experience, then maybe I don't have to feel so bad about it.

Ronit Plank 36:22

It's true. And that's part of where I spent a lot of time in the book. And what changed the most over the drafts was my ability to maybe go in and think about my parents and their history, and try to really illustrate who they were back then. So that they weren't just these ideas or characters, so you really get a sense of what they were like, early on.

Heather Vickery 36:39

I appreciate that. I that's, that's, it's important to do that, I think.

Ronit Plank 36:45

Yeah, well it's important not to villainize, you know, people in your memoir,

Heather Vickery 36:50

right. And memoirs are our stories. They're not other people's stories. So that's also quite a challenge to experience and to go through. I love it. Really quickly, your podcast is called. And then everything changed. And we mentioned that I was in Episode 47, which was really a lot of fun to do. I would, I'm curious to know why you started the podcast, and then what you're seeing as a result of having those powerful stories of change out into the world.

Ronit Plank 37:17

Yeah. So thanks for asking that. I feel that when I first started the podcast, I had this idea from the writerly position of you know, these pivotal moments in a book or in a movie script where everything kind of happens and hinges, and then the whole rest of the narrative comes out of that. So I had that angle. But I also had this idea that I have seen change in my life. And I know that, you know, people talk a lot about resilience, and they talk about empathy, and they talk about vulnerability. And it's, it's hard to kind of take away the labels, and really, really dig in and think about what that is. But in my life, I've learned that there are people who have withstood so many hard and difficult things, but they don't come out at the rest of the world from anger, or a lashing out, they are able to take what happened to them, and move in the world from a place of I made it through that. And I'm open and I understand who I am. And I and I'm receptive to change. And so I think that for me, starting the podcast was a way to understand how people make it through really hard times in their life. And my stories have been about abusive families. They've been about addiction. They they've covered a lot of things like for you your coming out story and losing your you know, the first marriage, there's stories of people who grew up in cults, there's, you know, but they made it out and they wrote books about it. And they're trying to spread the word, people who I feel like believe in are better angels. And I feel like listening to these stories, will hopefully it's painful sometimes. And they're hard. But I choose stories from people who have insight into what happened and are open and are willing to travel back to that time and figure out what was going on. Because it's sort of a reflection of what happened to me write my book is so different than it would have been 10 years ago, because of work that I've done. . But I think that putting this kind of stuff into the world putting these stories into the world will hopefully kind of feed off of itself and inspire people.

Heather Vickery 39:16

Yeah, absolutely. I think that it does in our shows are very complimentary to one another. And I love that so if you like The Brave Files you will like And Then Everything Changed.

Ronit Plank 39:24

Thank you.

Heather Vickery 39:25

So go check it out. But I mean, look at you just just in the last few minutes, the last less than 40 minutes. You've shared wild tremendous growth and success in building a life that you want and

that you love. reconnecting with your parents. I mean, this healthy like I literally can't even imagine having my parents show up every Sunday for dinner

Ronit Plank 39:25

Heather I'll admit that sometimes I hide for a few minutes.

Heather Vickery 39:57

But what it's wonderful for your children to I mean There's so many wonderful things and writing a book that took years to get done and this amazing podcast. And so there's so much to celebrate. And I'm curious for you, Ronit, how do you celebrate?

Ronit Plank 40:13

You know, I thought about this question, because I know I knew you were going to ask it. And I thought, you know, I feel like it's so many ways where you could say, well, I'm going to go out with my friends and have dinner. But really, what I love to do is I love to just do nothing, because I feel like I'm always doing stuff. I'm a mom, I'm a parent, you know, people listening know that how hard that is. And honestly, sometimes sitting on the couch, with my husband, and opening a bag of some kind of cheesy snack. Having a martini makes me so happy.

Heather Vickery 40:43

That's a wonderful way to celebrate. And that's why I love this question. Because there's, there's never any judgment attached to it, whatever it is that you want. Sometimes I celebrate by walking away from all of my people who I love dearly, and I just, I want to be alone, you know, and sit on the porch or whatever. There are all sorts of different ways to celebrate. And I mostly I asked this question so that we can lean more into that. What are these ways that we can acknowledge our growth, and the moments that make us stronger and healthier and better and get us to where we want to go so that we can do more of that have those moments? So yes, yay, I love it. Ronit, will you share your favorite charitable organization with us?

Ronit Plank 41:26

Yes, I'm going to give you two. The main one is Planned Parenthood, which I think most people know about. And the second one is when we found when my daughter was getting her Bat Mitzvah and we wanted to donate some money. And it's Soy Dog Foundation, which is SOL. And they basically help rescue dogs who are on the streets in Thailand. And so, you know, that's a nice specialized organization we've donated to.

Heather Vickery 41:48

I love that. So they will be our charity of the week, folks, go check them out, give which can time money shares, whatever it is. Ronit, will you give us your three words one last time?

Ronit Plank 41:59

Yes. Hope, change, courage.

Heather Vickery 42:03

Yeah, they're beautiful words, and you're a beautiful soul. I love your energy. And you have an incredible laugh. And I'm just so grateful that you chose to come and spend a little bit of time here with me and my listeners. Thank you.

Ronit Plank 42:14

Oh, Heather, thank you so much. I'm so happy we did this.

Heather Vickery 42:17

Me too. Alright, folks, I'm excited to hear what opened up for you with this conversation. What are you thinking more deeply about? In what ways? Do you want to lean into your own brave journey? And let me know give me a call. Share your thoughts at 312-646-0205. I check all of those voicemails myself, you can email me as well, Heather Vickery and co.com. I promise to actually get back to you. How about that. Nothing makes me happier than seeing a new positive review on Apple podcasts or Spotify. If you enjoyed this show, would you please just take a quick moment to subscribe rate and review it and maybe share it with someone else that would mean the world to me. It's such a pleasure to spend time with you every single week. I thank you for being here, for being a supporter and a listener. And I am grateful that I get to be a small part of your brave journey. So for today, and until we talk again, this is Heather Vickery reminding you to go out today and every day and choose briefly.

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