00:06 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Being able to hold opposing emotions is one of the hallmarks of good mental health. Something can be both bitter and sweet, and we tend to feel that we have to pick sides. To our confusion, we often can't stick with one or the other feelings either getting pulled back and forth or stuck in one or the other. Getting mired in the bitter side can lead to depression, but the sweet side has its own pitfalls such as being in denial about problems. What does it take to hold the tension of opposites? Is it the willingness to acknowledge that we can both be happy and sad? Weak and strong? We are in a continual state of change. If we can't accept impermanence underlies life, we can be badly rattled when fortune's wheel turns for the worst or be overly elated when it turns for the better. We must learn to live in between the difficult and the pleasant. When we taste only sweetness, then bitterness can't be far behind because nothing lasts forever.

I'm not telling you anything that you don't already know. We have been living through a historic pandemic that has been at the forefront of our minds for the past year and even with access to a vaccine, it seems that our lives are forever altered. Adding to the constant angst on social media, constantly showing a rosy view of other people's lives, the victory garden that is blooming like crazy, the perfect family game night, and Instagram-ready special recipes.

Holding the opposites in tensions is based on an awareness of both good and bad which are always present as forces in the world and within us. It takes a great sense of balance to live in this paradox, and it's rare to remain in the place of balance for very long. The reason is that our thoughts and emotions will tug at us continually pulling us along the spectrum from bitter to sweet and back. So, how do we find equanimity? How do we share those tools with our patients, our staff, and our colleagues?

On this month's podcast, I am thrilled to have Dr. Janice Powis with us. She's a Doctor of Audiology and a former private practice owner who has traded in her otoscope for a life where she travels the world teaching meditation. She leads “Learn to Meditate” workshops, and retreats to high-potential leaders in experiencing increased happiness, energy, and decreased stress. Sounds pretty magical, right?

Now, full disclosure, Dr. Powis and I first met in Costa Rica on an incredible retreat that she and her husband gathered members of the hearing industry professionals. We learned everything from yoga, to meditation, and worked with an incredible group of life coaches. This was, as I said, kind of magical. I want to connect you with this insanely amazing being. Welcome, Dr. Janice Powis to the podcast. It is so good to have you.

03:32 Dr. Janice Powis: Thank you so much. I just love what you had to say about that. First of all, I have to say that I was so delighted when you reached out to me. I feel so honored. You know that I have been admiring you from afar forever. I have the utmost respect for you and the Hearing Journal. To be here is a tremendous honor. Thank you.

03:58 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Honestly, there was no one else here. When it was the Hearing Journal that said, "We would like to do a podcast on meditation, and how that could coordinate on the things that are happening in hearing practices." I was like, "I know a woman. I know the exact woman." There was no one else.

Talk to us about your introduction to meditation, and how it led to a departure from your primary profession and allowed you to follow your passion?

04:41 Dr. Janice Powis: My journey to meditation began fourteen years ago. When I was in my graduate program, two years into it, and most if not all graduate students, I was burning the candles on both ends. I was starting to experience burn-out. Intuitively, I knew that it wasn't sustainable.

So, I started doing research, going online looking for books. I found some books to read. I found some resources online. In the very beginning, I took those resources and learned from there. It was five to ten minutes of sitting quietly, following my breath. Also, having the intention of catching myself and bringing myself back into the
present moment because I noticed doing was going way out into the future and over worrying. The meditation aspect that I brought to my life at a time, and bringing myself back into the present really changed things. It helped me to navigate my grad school work and clinical work with a lot more ease now.

Did it make the external peace of it change that? No. But what it did was it changed how I reacted to what was being presented to me. That is where I get the beginning and fast-forward. Many years later, since I moved from Memphis where I completed my course work at the University of Memphis. I moved to Boston to complete my fellowship at Bergamot Women’s Hospital, and worked at a couple of private practices before deciding to hang up my own shingle, with my own private practice which was the dream. I knew I wanted to go into private practice pretty much when I decided I wanted to be an Audiologist. How exciting was it to be able to do that? But, I did. Super exciting, so rewarding, and can be stressful.

I had abandoned my meditation practice for many years. Meditation is a practice. It is a habit. And frankly, I haven’t done it in years by the time I was into private practice ownership. Once again, burning the candle on both ends, super busy wearing all the hats, being the clinician at the same time. You may be able to relate - It was a lot. I need to do something about this. But, I came to research from a completely different lens. This time, I knew the immense value of working with someone one-on-one because that is how my patients forgot the success they were getting. Working with an expert in hearing rather than going out on their own like what I did the first time around, so I sought out a teacher. I took a "Learn to Meditate" course with a teacher that ended up being the teacher who taught me this particular method of meditation that I teach. It was life changing because before I started doing the practice, I was so unhealthy. I didn’t know it. I thought that it was part of getting older. I gained a ton of weight, my joints were aching, I was pre-diabetic, anxious all the time. When I wove meditation into my practice, I lost weight. I was thinking more clearly, I was making better business decisions. The very thing that I wanted to achieve in my practice came to me with far more ease. Don’t get me wrong because it wasn’t all sugar and unicorns, but I was reacting differently, and I thought everyone needed to learn this. So, I went to my teacher and I learned it.

09:12 Dr. D’ Anne Rudden: I think, because you bring up so many things that was all gold of all the things that you learned along your journey. Especially for women, we are in audiology primarily women. We are taught this culture of multi-tasking. The culture of you should be able to handle it all. The thought of sitting with yourself for a moment can be viewed as a waste of time, but it can be the most valuable thing you do in your entire day, to just sit quietly.

09:59 Dr. Janice Powis: Absolutely. You may have stricken fear into their hearts now because if you tell some of them to sit quietly, they already know it’s going to be torture or feel like a waste of time, or boring. The thing about meditation and learning from someone, is you can learn around how to navigate those aspects because I was the same way, too. In fact, part of why I wanted to learn meditation is not because I cherished it and devoted to it, but it was for productivity peace. I read that it was so good for productivity and it is true. You are so much more efficient when you take the time for meditation and other forms of self-care because you are not spinning anymore. You are clear and focused, and grounded. It is so much more a powerful place to do anything rather than fear and overwhelmed.

10:57 Dr. D’ Anne Rudden: It is rooted in Science, as well. It is not somebody’s great idea on a mountain top in India.

11:07 Dr. Janice Powis: Exactly. That is what I love about it too. I can see that with you too, our Science brain. I needed to understand the brain aspects of it, too. It is true that a lot of studies support that as well.

11:23 Dr. D’ Anne Rudden: When I have heard about the use of mindfulness and meditation in audiology specifically, it is usually in relationship to tinnitus and tinnitus management like teaching patients, skills to habituate from their tinnitus. Will you share experiences that you have had using both mindfulness and meditation potentially with your patients for both tinnitus and other things that came up in your clinical practice?
12:00 Dr. Janice Powis: What is so valuable about a meditation practice? The fact that it is so effective in autonomic regulation, regulating our nervous systems. That is why it can be an effective part of a treatment protocol to compliment a treatment protocol because millions of people experienced tinnitus. But, there is a subset that is hooked on to the tinnitus, and it can become debilitating to them. The relationship they have to the tinnitus is the cycle that we are trying to break - that pattern. Almost a hundred percent of the time if I speak with an audiologist, and they know that I am a meditation teacher, tinnitus comes up. In the past few years I've focused on teaching meditation in a more general sense, and I have been exploring a way to start bringing to people who suffer from tinnitus.

I would love to hear your thoughts on tinnitus management approaches using more holistic care you weave into your practice nowadays. I’d love to learn more about that.

13:18 Dr. D’Anne Rudden: A way to turn the table Dr. Powis. When I was teaching public yoga classes, I taught Restorative Yoga which was like a meditative in its own right. Putting people into deep supportive positions, walking them through some guided meditation practices. It is something I used to offer to any of my tinnitus patients that were pursuing tinnitus treatment options through sound therapy. Guess what? As a bonus, you have this access to come to the class at the studio that I was teaching and learn some ways that you can help unravels not only stress, because we all know that stress is a big deal as far as tinnitus goes, but it also unravels some of those brain patterns which are rooted on how your body carry things. Whether that is a brain pattern or a physical pattern, that was something from me that was a powerful tool at that time. This Segway to having the ability to teach people meditation is the juice of all of it. That is how it manifested for me.

15:00 Dr. Janice Powis: I think more Audiologist should weave meditation into their practices because there is enough evidence to show that it’s effective no matter how you want to look at it whether through Science or pragmatically. It could be easy to bring an end, but not a lot of Audiologists know how exactly to do that.

15:25 Dr. D’Anne Rudden: If you are trying to teach without personal experience, then it will be a difficult place to teach from. Starting your own practice, it may be the entry point for a lot of people listening because when they see it in themselves they would feel better, and their mind would feel more at peace. If I feel this way, then guess how my patients are going to feel? What do you think?

16:02 Dr. Janice Powis: I love what you said because it is exactly where I was going.

16:18 Dr. D’Anne Rudden: I do want to give you the opportunity to share a few simple ways those Professionals can start to use mindfulness and meditation both for themselves, and potentially if they are already in this kind of mindset. How can they transition to offering even small to their patients?

16:46 Dr. Janice Powis: Earlier when you were sharing that before one can recommend it, they should explore it themselves. I am going to continue the piece on.

The simple thing is to be truly open to learning a meditation practice because it is hard to make the recommendation. It is not impossible. You can recommend it, and you still should. If you understand how it impacts you, how it changes your relationship to stressors, it may not be tinnitus or maybe it is, then you can say with confidence, embodying this confidence that it is going to help the person who is sitting in front of you. Not only that, for you, meditation is a revolutionary act because when we begin with ourselves, then there is a ripple effect. Think about how you are showing up when you are beginning with yourself? How are you engaging with your family? How are you engaging with your patients? How are you engaging with your team? How are you engaging with your community? How are you engaging with them also creates a ripple effect. It sounds simple, but when you unpack what simple means, it's huge. Having to be open to possibility because some people may be resistant to meditation, or they might have a certain perspective about meditation.

Who was that who wrote "Ten Percent Happier?" Do you remember?
Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Dan...

Dr. Janice Powis: Dan Harris.

Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Harris. Yes.

Dr. Janice Powis: I started reading the book but I know his story. It was your typical New York anchor, like a button up and professional high performing. He had an anxiety attack online. He was your perfect avatar of the one who is very skeptical of meditation. He still speaks in terms that are not so esoteric which is what I like about it. I absolutely resonate with the more spiritual aspect which I will share more about myself. For those who are more skeptical, you might want to check out that book because we talk about Science. If you want something that will give you that fair advantage and increase your productivity, then meditation is a good place to start. It is a great way for you to understand how you can help your patients. I took the time to create some resources to get to the listeners of the Hearing Journal.

Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Don't share that yet. Let's put that nugget in the afternoon show. Stay tuned so you can get some of those personalized recommendations and resources from Dr. Powis.

Stay tuned. We are going to come back on the Aftershow. We are going to hear a little more about some tools and resources, and a little side note, "Ten Percent Happier," there's also a podcast. Check that out, too. It is good stuff. Dr. Powis, thank you so much for being our guest today.

Dr. Janice Powis: It is my absolute pleasure.

AFTERSHOW

Dr. D' Anne Rudden: We are back on the Hearing Journal Podcast Aftershow with Dr. Janice Powis, who is a mindfulness and meditation teacher. She has traded in her otoscope for a life of meditation, and teaching people how to use meditation personally and professionally.

I know you had finished the episode - the first half teasing about some resources. But I don't want to get into that yet. I would like to have you tell a little bit about how you sold your private practice? That was a dream? You were able to sell your private practice, and now you are a full time meditation and retreat leader. Right now I am super jealous. It is spinning all in my head, I want to do that. That sounds amazing. How did you create that life for yourself?

Dr. Janice Powis: Transitioning the practice was quite bitter-sweet. Something I did not mention earlier, a few years into running my practice, I finally started to gain momentum because it took time. I found out that my mother was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. It was an interesting time because while my practice was starting to experience some success or starting to reach the heights of the success, essentially my mother was dying. I have to say that having a meditation practice among other self-care practices and the support of the community, you need to have all those things in addition to meditation. It is what helped me to cultivate the resilience to navigate and move through that. She did end up passing away about a year and a half after she was diagnosed. I was still running the practice the best that I could. I was doing the thing. I was showing up and serving my patients. But a year and a half after she died, Phil, my husband, started to experience his own health challenges. At the time we didn't know what was going on, and his health was not in a good place. We had tried so many doctors in the Boston area, and we weren't finding answers. Ultimately we decided to release the practice transition away so that we could focus on this healthy experience that I had with my mother.

I mentioned to you that this was my dream. The private practice was my dream. The gratitude that I have is I experienced that dream. Something that I know a lot of people are experiencing right now in the time of a
pandemic, and I truly believe that in times of chaos, uncertainty and pain there are opportunities. I am grateful to say following my intuition on focusing on his health really paid off because he is on a tremendous healing journey. His health has taken a huge upswing. We finally found the care, and he is doing so much better now. Having transitioned out of having a private practice ownership to doing something else. I was already in my teacher training, and teaching around the time that I was transitioning through that gave me the opportunity to spend more time serving in another way through teaching meditation which has been really great. To renew the relationship that I have to my profession, right now I am just thinking of some other ways that I can serve in this capacity in audiology. Thinking about the tinnitus aspect in meditation is really exciting to me. I haven't worked with a ton of students who have tinnitus because I have been teaching in a general sense, but starting to explore more what that could look like or are other things. I truly believe even with all the uncertainty that some or many are failing in our particular industry, it is right for opportunity and innovation.

25:21 Dr. D'Anne Rudden: What often limit us is our own mental capacity to see expansion in the time of stress. Meditation is a practice that can help expand that capacity. At least it has been for me. What I am hearing you say is that even now with the practices that you've been having, you are still in a place of discovery where you can be even bigger or more abundant even on a time when other people might say, "Oh my gosh Janice Powis. Why would you do that now, things are so uncertain?"

26:07 Dr. Janice Powis: Yes, it is true. I love your introduction about the tension between the two. It is true. The reality sometime some people can be accused of Pollyannaish or overly optimistic or too positive, but the truth of the matter is that both aspects exist. We can choose in which direction that we want certain move things without dismissing those painful aspects. We can choose to start taking those pieces that are going to be more productive and creative, and moving us towards our evolution because that's what it all about.

26:56 Dr. D'Anne Rudden: I think what you alluded to in the first segment of the key aspects of meditation are when your mind, your thought processes is taking you in this crazy direction. Having the wear-it-all and the skill which is cultivated doesn't come out of nowhere of being able to draw yourself back more quickly with each practice.

27:26 Dr. Janice Powis: Absolutely. It is definitely a practice. Think about the neurons and the pathways that have to be created physiologically into our body? It takes time while we are doing that. We are absolutely wired for negativity bias because that is a survival mechanism. It's how we see life as a human being. It is meant to keep us protected, but we are on a point where it is no longer protecting us. It is damaging us, and returning to what is true rather than hooking onto those narratives. The stories that we create over time become faster and faster, and soon it becomes more on how you respond rather than not.

28:16 Dr. D'Anne Rudden: We can all use a lot more of those tools especially in times of crazy pandemic life. This year has given us a lot of opportunities to see resilience and actions. To sit in a place where we can easily get pulled down in a rabbit hole of negativity and missed opportunities. It becomes more doom and gloom. What are we going to do with our lives? Audiology tends to have a bit of negativity bias from a lot of external forces. There are ways to keep ourselves in a bit of a better place.

Will you talk about resources? I don't want to get to the end. We never talked about it clearly. Please share with everyone some of the things that you have available resources or recommendations so that they can start their own journey.

29:31 Dr. Janice Powis: Yes. Once I knew that I was going to come on board here, having these conversations with you, and the Hearing Journal audience, I have put together some resources for the listeners of this show to access. They can access it through vidameditation.com/hearingjournal.

30:01 Dr. Janice Powis: What's in there is just some training on starting a practice of your own. Ways that they can bring meditation into their own work or practices and how they can share it with their patients. Some different things to consider as you are beginning your own practice. A lot of meditation 101, if they are interested
in learning those things.

30:27 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: It so good. Thank you for doing that. I really appreciate that you took the time to put that together for anyone that might be listening because you are one of us. You are not just someone sitting on a mountain top, but you've walked the path with us and continue to be in a different way. Thank you for doing that.

31:01 Dr. Janice Powis: Thank you. This has been really wonderful.

31:06 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: It is interesting because my first introduction to meditation was when my teacher said, "Meditation is a 3 step process. Choose your seat, be still, and focus." That was it. That was the only tool that we were given, and we are going to meditate for an hour. It was the most painful experience in my life.

31:31 Dr. Janice Powis: It is when someone said you need to lose weight, eat less and move more. What do I do with that?

31:41 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Every day I would build this throne and this is one of my teacher's training. I would get there early and I would pull every blanket I could think of to give myself some comfort. You are not supposed to move. You are not supposed to acknowledge your physical body. My whole body was revolting, and I hated that. There's going to be a better way.

32:08 Dr. Janice Powis: Absolutely. That is why I am so excited and continue to be devoted to the particular method that I teach because it is easier. It is an entry point to meditation, it is almost like they are throwing you in advance. That is what monks do. That is why people don't succeed with meditation because of the way some teach. They teach you the renounce monk method. We are not renunciates or monks. There's a reason why monks meditate like that. That is not a wrong meditation, but I think that there's definitely a method more appropriate for everyday people like us that is more accessible, doable, and comfortable. What did you say? You said revolt? You don't want to revolt?

32:59 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: It was like austerity practice.

33:02 Dr. Janice Powis: That is hard. I agree.

33:06 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Thirty days in? It started to get easier, but I am not going to lie. I haven't been in a place where I wasn't trying to live a day-to-day life. I was in a thirty-day teacher training program where I didn't have anywhere else to be, so I had to fight the mental gremlins in my meditation journal from that time on. If I was trying to do that now in the midst of getting up in the morning making breakfast for the family, or running the practice, then no way. I am out.

33:46 Dr. Janice Powis: Yes, I agree. It is too much.

33:49 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Who are your Gurus? Who are your teachers? Who do you not only find gratitude in, but how they have led you to where you are to continue to learn from?

34:08 Dr. Janice Powis: My meditation teacher is Jonni Pollard. His lineage is of the Vedic tradition. The method that I teach is non-religious. That is what I like about it, but the lineage of that is from Vedic groups. He continued to be my teacher before I became a teacher. He is the one who taught me and I continued to learn from him.

Another person I consider a teacher is Michael Singer. I spend some time with him when I can. He is just a couple hours away from where we lived, so we go to his temple, but we can't now because of the pandemic. He is just an incredible example of an everyday person who has a very deep spiritual practice. He grew and sold his software company. He was the original creator of electronic medical records. He sold his company for 8 billion dollars. And throughout he was dedicated to his spiritual and meditation practice. His books, “The Surrender Experiment” and “The Untethered Soul”, I've read those books so many times. He is an incredible soul to be around with, in person
as well.

I've been re-reading the autobiography of a Yogi. I've read the book a couple of times, and each time I dive into Yogi Nanda's work, I find something new. I definitely have been diving more into his work, as well.

35:50 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: I am glad that you brought up spirituality in relation to meditation because it is sometimes what scares people. When I used to teach yoga, I used to say, "Now, we are going to talk about some concepts, but let me give a little like Astric C fine printed bottom for what we are about to do." That is where yoga and meditation grew up on the same side of the street as Hinduism. Although cousins, yoga and meditation can sit alongside whatever your religious persuasion maybe. It is not a religion or any of it to solve. It happens to have some similarities. If you have siblings, or cousins or what not. You may have grown-up in the same house, but you have different personalities and things that make you who you are. People don't have to be like, "Oh no, I am sorry. I have this religious persuasion, and therefore I can not do that because I don't want to get indoctrinated into some strange religion."

37:10 Dr. Janice Powis: Right. That is a common myth and misconception. Whenever I chat about it, I chat about other aspects of the benefits of it first, and oftentimes people on their own want to dive into those pieces. It does happen that they want to learn more about that because that is our nature. For every single human being, whatever religion even if you label or identify as an Atheist, we all have the sense of deeper peace. I think we just call it something different, and everybody does.

37:55 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: I want to lean into your experience as a practice owner, and your experience as a meditation teacher. Are there any other alternative treatment options that you are familiar with or you can think of that Audiologists should potentially have an awareness of or something that they might consider bringing into their own practices?

38:24 Dr. Janice Powis: Yes. This is something that I have been thinking about a lot. When I've been thinking about another way that I can start to show up in Audiology potentially tinnitus, in meditation, and other wellness practices. These are the things I am so passionate about.

What is really important is for Audiologist to be open to working with other wellness practitioners to create more integrative approach like for a tinnitus patient. The root cause is often hearing loss, and oftentimes you can alleviate the tinnitus experience through hearing aids, and that is great, but sometimes not. Whenever the person is suffering from tinnitus we have to remember that mind and body are connected. It is important to honor what we consume and how we move because whenever we are in a chronic state of fright or flight, digestion breaks down, our immune system function breaks down. What we eat, which is not our area of expertise, but partnering with a functional nutritionist so that the person can start to address those things. Also, start bringing in movement like yoga, or it doesn't have to be yoga it could be walking because if there isn't physical movement the body just becomes stagnant, and inflammation continues. On top of that is having a more conventional treatment. I keep using the word "Integrative" because that is where I believe everything is moving because more and more people are starting to recognize an honor in order for people to reach the highest level of healing, we need to do that.

40:21 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: I mean there are walking meditations which is a mindfulness practice. Learning how to bring that in and partner with other professionals - that's brilliant.

40:38 Dr. Janice Powis: It is okay because it takes a team oftentimes.

40:43 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: It helps us to feel less isolated. Sometimes we feel like we are sitting on our own private island both in terms of the profession and the ear on how it's viewed in relation to the rest of the body.

40:57 Dr. Janice Powis: Yes. It is true.

40:59 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Can you give us a little bit of a crystal ball view? We talked about trying to stay more
centered, but I am going to ask you to teleport us a little more forward into the future. Where do you see audiology short-term and long term?

41:28 Dr. Janice Powis: Just a few moments ago we were talking about having the intention of creating that more integrative approach and building the team. I believe that we are going to move more towards a more functional model. I think that is the case. As far as technology goes, I recently learned or heard someone say that once something goes digital, we are in the territory of Moore’s law which is essentially the hockey stick growth of change because of that technology. We deal with technology, and especially with the pandemic doing work virtually is becoming more important. It is more than a future thing, but I think it is a present thing, and it is a thing that is here to stay for the future (I believed). I do think that we are going to be weaving artificial intelligence in ways that we can imagine, but I would say fear not, audiologist.

Tesla, for example, experimented with taking away all human interaction with one of their manufacturing plants and it did not work. But once they brought in the human element, they were able to bring success back into that particular plant.

Humans need humans, that will never go away. Humans will mean a community, that will never go away. But it is going to change. Keeping that beginner’s mind, being open, approaching things in a place of curiosity, you can’t go wrong no matter what the future holds. Those things are already here. We may not know about them, and they are coming.

43:22 Dr. D’ Anne Rudden: And staying centered as much as possible. Say one more time, the website where the people can get their resources?

43:35 Dr. Janice Powis: It’s vidameditation.com/hearingjournal.

43:49 Dr. D’ Anne Rudden: Dr. Janice Powis, what an amazing conversation and an amazing woman you continually show up in the world. I am so honored to know you, and thank you for sharing a little bit with everyone what makes you such a beautiful, wonderful colleague.

44:08 Dr. Janice Powis: I really appreciate it. Thank you so much. This has been so delightful.

44:15 END