



EPISODE 011 – Andrea J. Lee

You are listening to the Fun and Profit for the Active Entrepreneur Podcast Episode 11, a very special conversation with thought leader Andrea J. Lee.

Welcome to the Fun & Profit for the Active Entrepreneur podcast. I'm your host, Paula G. Join me as we explore what it takes to get you out from behind your desk and endless to-do's so you're feeling more vibrant, alive, and engaged in your business and in your life.

I can't tell you just how excited I am to have very special guest, Andrea J. Lee, here with me today. This podcast wouldn't even exist without Andrea's loving support of me and my business over the past few years. We had the great opportunity to work together. It was a full-circle moment for me, given that I first discovered Andrea and her work early in 2003, 2004 when I was still sitting in my cubicle in corporate, and just contemplating and starting to get trained in the coaching industry. I have followed her work for a very, very long time. She's one of the deepest-thinking, most creative and thoughtful and interesting people that I've ever had the opportunity to connect with and work with.

Let me tell you a little bit about her from her bio. I could gush all day about what I love about Andrea. "Andrea is founder of Thought Partners International, which does business online under the identity of Wealthy Thought Leader University—an internationally-known company that has helped thousands of entrepreneurs upturn the

status quo. Through coaching they learn to prove their original business concepts, design offerings that break new ground, and sell in lucrative ways that feel good.” She’s also “Director of Strategic Planning for Indrani’s Light Foundation—a global non-profit devoted to eradicating domestic violence, in partnership with the NGO Population Services International.

“Andrea has earned a long-standing reputation for excellence and ethics as a mentor coach, trusted advisor and thought partner, but the secret is out: she’s also a gifted speaker with a talent for making serious topics playful, and turning play into serious impact.” I can vouch for that, really being able to create experimentation and play out of something that can often feel hard when it comes to creating a business.

Alongside her coaching team at Wealthy Thought Leader University, she’s “taught breakthrough thinking to thousands of entrepreneurial leaders from the start-up phase through 6, 7 and 8 figure incomes. These audiences work in a range of fields including entertainment, technology, philanthropy, manufacturing, the performing arts, therapy, coaching, the healing arts, entrepreneurship and more.” The woman has the broadest perspective on business of anyone that I personally know. Without any more ado, let us jump into the very wise and thoughtful conversation that Andrea and I had the gift of having just a few weeks ago.

Paula: I am so excited to have you here today, Andrea J. Lee. Thank you for coming.

Andrea: Thanks for having me. It’s really fun to be here on Active Entrepreneur.

Paula: The Active Entrepreneur Podcast wouldn’t even exist if it weren’t for your encouragement and mentoring over the years. I’m sure some of that will come up here. Before we dive too deep, because, of course, I’ve been following you around since 2004, and then was blessed the last few years to do some closer mentoring and whatnot. For people who might not yet know you – there are probably a few people

living under a rock somewhere that don't – can you just give us that broad brush? You have such a unique perspective and have had your hands and creativity in so many different things.

Andrea: I have been doing coaching for entrepreneurs for a long time, almost 20 years now. The slight twist that I think you're referring to, Paula, if we could call it a lemon twist or a lime twist, I really care a lot about **building businesses that are in alignment with the person on the inside.** You could say I'm not for cookie cutters, I'm not for formulas. I'm a true blue coach that listens. I also think that every single one of us on Earth at this moment, we cannot hope but care about the crap that's hitting the fan in all different parts of our world where we can do better as human beings. Our businesses have an opportunity to do something towards those causes as well. I like to link those up. My current business coaching brand is called Wealthy Thought Leader. That really says it all. I like to work with thought leaders that want to upturn the status quo and make something fantastic happen for the world and for their lives.

Paula: You've expanded beyond the business world with your involvement with Indrani's Light, a larger nonprofit, and woven those threads together, too. Our worlds are more alike than different.

Andrea: Definitely. In the last couple years, Paula, you've had a ringside seat to see as I took on an executive role with a new not-for-profit who was a business coaching client. She's now creating amazing results in the domestic violence field. Just had her TEDx talk, traveling to India and Trinidad globally to really help women who are facing abuse in their homes and their lives. I think that the crossover really lives in the fact that as entrepreneurs, there's a favorite saying of mine from Coach Dave Buck; that is, I'm self-employed and I work for a lunatic some days.

Paula: I always say if you're self-employed and you're working for an ass, you only have one place to look, in the mirror.

Andrea: That's so beautifully put. It's true. Putting ourselves through unnecessary stress and difficulty, challenge, some could say that some entrepreneurs are almost self-abusive in some ways. There is overlap. It's been so fun to stretch my wings and bring the entrepreneurial mindset to the philanthropy world and the activism world. That's a little bit about me.

Paula: I've enjoyed the ringside seat for many things. For me, the last few years has been a maturing process of that over five years fulltime in business, so now it's eight and a half years, but at looking at things and then realizing: That's how things really work. Versus that new look at things where suddenly you think everybody knows more than you and then you start to realize: Wait a minute; maybe there's a lot of equity in varied pieces that can go into this and I play a role.

Andrea: You play the central role. Nobody knows you better than you, right?

Paula: I would say.

Andrea: Unless there's something very different and strange going on like a possession or something happening.

Paula: We'll try to keep the paranormal to a minimum. I know one of your big foci – because there's never just one focus for you – is your new book that you've been working on. Maybe you could tell us a little bit more about what that book is about, and the fact that it's a departure from the very straight business and famous business books in the coaching world that you've been known for in the past.

Andrea: Sure. I've written lots over my business coaching career. I'd say writing really has been *the* central thing that has made my business work. If I didn't write, I wouldn't have the business and wouldn't have the pleasure of my clients that I have had the

pleasure of working with. *Multiple Streams of Coaching Income, Pink Spoon Marketing*, very business-y topics, like how-to's. This current book is basically a memoir. It doesn't have a title yet, so I'll just call it my memoir. It's a story of what I grew up through as the child of an immigrant family who was doing its best. I, as a child, experienced it as very, very challenging. I became a very angry young woman, violently angry in some cases. I write a lot more about that in the book.

It's been very cathartic to actually learn how to write about a character, in this case me, who was very angry at the world, and how that came to resolve in the marriage that I'm in, 20 years, to Mike, and how I found really a way towards peace that I honestly never thought would be mine. I never thought I would feel peaceful, whole, hopeful, and able and equipped to help other people see that that kind of peace is possible. It's really the story of a piece of my life. Of course, you can't get more different from writing business stuff than to really be personal about this kind of thing. When you say it's a departure, you got it right. It's probably the most opposite thing I could write ever.

Paula: But such the right thing. I still have a hard time picturing you as this angry, angry person. From what I understand and have heard – because I eavesdrop when you show up on other podcasts and things – that a lot of that anger was self-directed. Would that be fair to say?

Andrea: Yeah. I think that anger in the world, it is fueled from within. There's something that's feeling burned up or charred or un-whole or broken or however you would describe it inside the person that leads to the expression of it on the outside. Angry people are just doing the best that they can. For those of us who care about this kind of thing, when people are at their angriest, it's when they actually need love the most. It's so hard to really – we all have big hearts. I think part of my definition of an active entrepreneur is someone who actively stretches to love when it is the most difficult to love. That's really at the heart, the theme of what I'm writing.

Paula: I think of just the journey of being an entrepreneur myself and colleagues and friends that I've gotten to know in different masterminds and what have you. There are so many opportunities for us to beat the crap out of ourselves. Typically we tend to be high achievers coming into this crazy thing, otherwise we'd just be sitting back and not being entrepreneurial. It can be so easy to turn that inward, especially for the solopreneurs or the people who are leading a really small team. You don't even give yourself the blessing of time to eat or pee during your day, which would be like harsh conditions. OSHA wouldn't even allow it in a real business that's manufacturing or something. We'd never allow that.

Andrea: It's a human rights violation sometimes what an entrepreneur will do to themselves. I love the way you put that, Paula. I think it's true. I heard food-wise as well, when you're an entrepreneur and you're busy, you might just go grab some carb-heavy, like a piece of toast or something not very protein-rich or nutrient-rich, a bag of chips, some junk food or whatever. We all do it and that's okay. Food for thought to your point is, in prison situations or in hostile situations like kidnappings and such, it is a known fact that you feed the people high carbs and low protein because they're more easily brainwashed and manipulated in that state of nutrition. Think about it. If you're not feeding yourself good, balanced protein, if you're not moving around, going for a bike ride every Friday or every Wednesday, or whatever it is that you're doing now that inspires you so much, you are actually putting yourself in that kind of imprisoned situation.

Paula: That might explain some of the lunches at conferences, too. How are sales conversions affected when we feed them only carbs and no protein?

Andrea: That's hilarious.

Paula: You taught me all about experimentation, so it just begs the question right there.

Andrea: Fascinating.

Paula: That's pretty good. One of the things when I think about subtleties – a lot of the really obvious stuff people will go: Oh, that's so obvious. One of the things that I learned from you was the richness in subtleties and some of those, I don't even know if shades of gray, but subtleties. I can remember the first time I got to experience you live beyond the mini live experience I had a decade ago was when you were doing a lot of work with the Feldenkrais, or Frankenstein as your staff would call it. For people who aren't familiar with that, it's really a method of body alignment and how we use our bodies and how that impacts our bodies. That whole arc that you taught about that, both in our bodies and how we act and how we can make things easier with really subtle pieces and subtle bits of awareness is pretty life changing. I think it ties right into both the memoir and this human rights violation conversation, don't you think?

Andrea: I absolutely agree. If I were to boil it down, I think the suffering that entrepreneurs go through, some of it is purposeful. Some of it is the grit in the oyster or the friction that's needed to make fire, to birth a cool business. Some of it isn't. Some of it is basically detritus; it's garbage. We're not noticing that that suffering is happening uselessly, like **it's wasted suffering**. I think it's because we're moving too fast. Honestly, we're just trying to do too much in too little time. It's inhuman. We don't notice. The subtleties you're referring to are completely lost.

It's like if we were to look at a beautiful piece of art that was mostly red and we just glance at it, we might think: This is just like a paint chip. It looks like a square, red piece of art. If we were to take a little bit of time with it, get present with it, you would see the shades of the color and the texture, the brushstrokes inside that artwork that looked predominantly red when we sped by it. The same goes for us as entrepreneurs. If we're going through our day and just speeding through, we're **not noticing these nuances**. Slowing down, as contrary as it might sound – one of my favorite sayings about success as an entrepreneur, **if you want to earn twice as much, you really**

need to learn to work half as much. If you want to earn twice as much, you need to work half as much. While there have been people and clients and friends and so on who take me up on the literalness of this: Is it actually 200 percent output when you work 50 percent less? No, it's not meant to be a literal thing, but the principle of it is what's so important. When we start to learn to slow down, notice the subtleties that you're referring to, good stuff happens.

Paula: If you don't slow down, there's no room for that, I call it sort of a sacred space. The time that you need – people are always asking me: How do you get so much done? As you know, I get things done. You have to hold some time sacred, otherwise nothing becomes your own because you're just bowing to every other whim or Twitter update or any number of things that you think you “should” be doing.

Andrea: It's kind of funny because we're on an Active Entrepreneur Podcast. Getting active outside work is some of the best stuff you can do to make your business sing. I was just talking to somebody the other day who said – it was so sad. I was in a networking environment and they asked me what my hobbies were. I had to say nothing. I don't have any hobbies because every single minute of the day is soaked up with entrepreneurship. I know you have strong beliefs about that, right, Paula?

Paula: You have hobbies. You're interested in so many different things. I get the sense that you've got a wide palette of interests and not necessarily just one or two that you pursue diligently and regularly. That's how I see it.

Andrea: You would be correct. I have a slice of my life where I let myself – I have a few things that I do pretty consistently, but I'm not strict about it. I don't see it as: I have this as a hobby, now I must be this person for the rest of my life, like experimenting and adventurous with food, sitting meditation, being out in nature and being with the dog. These are pretty much staples, my bread and butter, alternate activities from working. You're so right. This is maybe a fun topic. I have this section of my life that's

something new. Today it might be Pilates. Tomorrow it might be going and volunteering at the bear sanctuary that's happening up-island. The next day it might be something completely different, learning to play an instrument or learning calligraphy again or something. I let myself kind of popcorn. That was enough. I watched three YouTube videos and tried it and that's enough. It's the experimentation of it that makes it sizzle.

Paula: What is it about experimentation that turns you on?

Andrea: I think it's that I hate the idea that everything is known. How boring is that? If everything is already known, we might as well just go have a long nap. It's all done. Wrap it up. Why bother with existence? **This human compulsion towards evolution and nature's natural propensity to change and evolve, that's what experimentation is to me.** It's just more intentional, because, as humans, we can choose and act upon things, our environment. The unknown, not being able to foresee what might happen if we mix this with that, the surprise and novelty of that, the possibility of magic happening, a solution could arrive that we have not imagined, those are some of the reasons why experimenting is fun.

Paula: I like the innocence and curiosity. I find I'm such a better human being when I'm coming from curiosity and experimentation than any other way.

Andrea: That's why we like each other so much.

Paula: I just laugh because of all the science analogies in your teaching. I can remember being in high school, high school chemistry class in the old days of a bunch of beakers and a wooden thing that would hold the half-dozen beakers that you did whatever to, and that not being my strongpoint. They're like: Clean up. I take these steaming hot glass and pour them all under cold water. I learned about the experimentation of hot glass and quickly cold water don't mix.

Andrea: See, how evolved are you now? You know never to do that again.

Paula: I don't know about never do it again, but moving up the evolutionary chain. I have thumbs and all, so that's one step above the cats and all that stuff.

Andrea: Good for you.

Paula: In terms of nature and things running their course, I can remember a course you did a couple years ago where you talked about graceful endings. In your book *We Need to Talk*, which I love, also talk about those tough conversations when things need to ebb and flow and what have you. With your memoir being birthed and different pieces – my understanding is you're going through some shifts and such in your own business world. Maybe you could talk to the level that's appropriate. Just talk about some of those shifts and ebbs and flows and evolutions that are happening for you. You've been in business a long time and have different things happening. It sounds like it's one of those natural turnings.

Andrea: I think essentially the facts are that it's been close to 15 years of business coaching, and five years of doing that under a brand called Wealthy Thought Leader. I recently announced that it's time to "graduate" or close down Wealthy Thought Leader effective May 1, 2016. This announcement is just now getting out. We're, of course, doing our job to let our clients know first because it impacts them the most. Everybody has been nothing but overwhelmingly supportive and celebratory, although, of course, people who are sad. I also, there's a little sweet and sour to it. I think the reason is I put a lot of **emphasis on natural cycles**. It's not something that's talked about very often, but closing a business is not the end of the world. It doesn't mean that you failed. It doesn't mean that the business idea was bad. It may just mean this year the leaves are more red than they have been another year. It's time. It's a useful thing, I think, for everyone to think about, because it releases us from the kind of performance anxiety

that we're supposed to or we should have a forever and ever, amen business that never goes away, which I think, quite frankly, is really a disservice. If we have that pressure on ourselves, **it can really force us into making decisions that don't serve us.** I really just listen to my soul. I meditate and have a very active inner life, lots of conversations inside me that happen on a regular basis. I feel really lucky about that sort of spiritual connection that allowed me to hear: You're supposed to be doing something else soon. Without even knowing what that is, Paula, that's the other thing –

Paula: It's hard.

Andrea: It is hard. Okay, great. It's time. **Let's start making the moves that are the most honest.** The most honest thing that I could do in this moment is to be transparent about this, rather than pretend with a white-knuckled grip on the handlebars: No, we're just going to keep going until we figure out what's next and then we'll announce what's next as soon as we're closing this and opening the next thing. I think that's dishonest, unless, of course, you're a one in 100,000 that that's truly happening for in a genuine way.

The story that I share about it is simply that it's better for me to go full out and serve in my current Wealthy Thought Leader business and end in a bang, and my heart has not a single bit of it that's saying: I wish I could shut down sooner, or, I'm really not supposed to be doing this. I don't want any of that to contaminate my current work of art, my current business. Being proactive in announcing it and then allowing myself the glory of the unknown to say something new is coming, that's an act of faith I feel really lucky to be able to come from. My wish is that everyone can be thinking about that. Maybe it's not that you're shutting down your business, but maybe it's that you're phasing out a certain part of your business, certain services you no longer want to offer, a certain client that you are no longer a fit for, or a team member. All of these are ebbs and flows and graceful goodbyes that can really nourish you if you allow them to.

Paula: Just hanging out in that gap between what was and knowing it's not right, and then not sure what's happening yet, at least for me when I think of that, is such a terrifying place. Not that I haven't sat there, too, at times, but being able to do so intentionally and consciously in the way that you model things is really always cool to watch, even though I don't have that close of a ringside seat. It doesn't mean that you don't have – maybe I'm speaking for you, but it doesn't mean my experience in the past of what you've shared, it doesn't mean that you don't have doubts or things aren't difficult. It's just in that macro sense, that meta level of just allowing it to be there and messy when it's messy and nice when it's nice, clear when it's clear and murky when it's murky.

Andrea: It's just a lie. It doesn't matter what level of success anybody gets to, everyone has bad days. Everyone has doubts. I love hearing that being transparent helps other people. I would need to do it anyway, even if it didn't help other people, to be the truest version of me. I think the phase in my life when I was really angry, I was lying to myself. I was in denial about reality. I was allowing a story, a whole bunch of stories, to create a reality for me when I was this raging, angry person. I think that's why I'm able to be peaceful now. I know what it means to tell stories and not be as truthful as possible. I know how valuable it is to slow down, not know, get clear before I choose to act. Racing forward towards it is, a lot of times it's fear. It's just fear of not knowing, fear of people challenging you because you seem to not know what you're doing. **Paula, I know exactly what I'm doing, I just don't know exactly what it is.**

Paula: I like that distinction. You know exactly what you're doing, you're just not sure exactly what that next thing is.

Andrea: Yeah. **I'm busy not knowing.** This is very clear. I have no doubt what I'm doing. It's kind of a confounding but interesting topic. I think with any of the global problems that are going on in the world, there's a lot of violence and crazy stuff

happening in the world. We rush towards solutions when more listening would be really awesome. I guess that makes me a coach, huh?

Paula: Just that space in between – I've been taking an online course for a while with Pema Chodron and that idea of resting in the rawness. I love that phrase. Sometimes it can be really raw, any situation, but being able to rest there, even if it's just for a tiny bit, makes such a difference in the trajectory and outcome and experience.

Andrea: That's so beautiful. My imagination says that you find the ability, those moments of grace to rest in the rawness are supported by being active, going out on your bike. I would imagine – I'm not a cyclist, but I would imagine that on the road, there are moments of flow when you are in that rawness and it's peaceful.

Paula: And also, whether I'm out biking or kayaking or hiking and snowshoeing as the season turns, you're in a space. You may be resting in the rawness, but you're also being able to be fully present in the miracle of now, whether that's something beautiful like being in the flow riding your bike, or looking at a beautiful hawk from the cockpit of the kayak, or even if you're pedaling like yesterday and my toes were going numb because it's so cold. You're just really hyper present in the present moment, which I think opens up a lot more space and clearing and, to me, a lot more peace to be able to walk forward into whatever business, celebrations, or challenges might be showing themselves.

Andrea: I think that's the heart of everything. You find peace in the activeness.

Paula: They talk about active recovery. Or yoga, even when you're in a static pose, it's never static because you're always micro-adjusting.

Andrea: Beautiful. That's actually a big Feldenkrais thing, too. Really nice.

Paula: I think of Feldenkrais every morning when I'm on my meditation cushion. I'm like: All right, how can I get just five percent more comfortable here?

Andrea: That's so great.

Paula: What excites you most about this next unknown chapter of evolution and experimentation?

Andrea: This feeling of everything in my life having happened for a reason and coming to bear on whatever my work looks like next is really quite, it's quite thrilling in a whole-bodied way. We all have dark parts of our story that might be dark or darker or darkest. It doesn't matter what degree your story has darkness in it. As somebody who's come from a pretty darn dark place, just this ability to see the contrast that whatever I do next will be the light version and making that dark of use – there are times in my life when I honestly thought I would never, ever be able to say things out loud to anybody, even good friends much less be on a podcast with you and have strangers hear about how really ugly a certain part of my life was. To be able to be that kind of defenseless and open and have a quiet certainty that that's of use, there's an effortlessness in it. I don't have to try to do anything. **Exactly who I am is on purpose. There's emancipation in that.** I'm just reveling in that, resting in the rawness of that right now. As far as what it turns into, whether I end up speaking about it or teaching young women about it or going to college campuses or continuing to work with entrepreneurs but with a different focus, I think that's really the biggest thrill that will stay with me.

Paula: Who knows what will happen in a test kitchen but it will be good.

Andrea: I feel so lucky to have a community that isn't angry back at me, like: What do you mean you're not going to be business coaching anymore? That would be a very natural fear. There are a lot of good things happening in the world, so many good, good people, each of us doing little good things all the way along. That's the thing to do. It's

so easy to be overwhelmed by the badness, but if we just do what's within reach, the little good things, we'll reach a tipping point.

Paula: As I've had you carrying my rocks of confidence, or whatever we called it there for a while, the idea of little, tiny things happening, that they'll build and lead to more even if it's not a direct path – and it's never a direct path really. A lot of times it's comforting. I come back to that a lot. Here's a little thing, a little seedling which may grow, may not grow, but there's growth happening. It's not a deep, dark valley of desperation, as a couple friends and I call it.

Andrea: Nice.

Paula: I always ask folks, when we get close to wrapping up here, what does being an active entrepreneur mean to you personally?

Andrea: It means being fully engaged with life and painting with all the colors. A non-active entrepreneur is very narrowly focused and very single-minded and not open to integrating what they're doing with the rest of the world. It means physically active in having adventures to complement the inner world and the mental world that we live in so often as an entrepreneur. It means being active for things that we care about beyond the work, so tying the actual work, whether you're a coach or a marketer or a healer or an artist, integrating that with the causes out in the world that mean something to you. It might be politics. It might be an environmental thing. It might be any number of things. Those are the three main ways I think of being active as an entrepreneur.

Paula: I love that. Being engaged and alive, to me, that's so important because we can lose sight of some of that when we're caught up in our head. How can folks find you? I will obviously put all your links and goodies in the show notes and what have you. For people who might be listening to this audio on the go, how can they connect with and find you?

Andrea: If you're interested in business coaching, which I will continue to do, just not under the Wealthy Thought Leader brand, you can go to WealthyThoughtLeader.com. That will still live on and have an access point for people. We'll have free audio and different giveaways and stuff like that you can just access and study and learn directly from there. Or, if you're interested more in the activism, philanthropy, leadership side of things, more personal information about my memoir, then go to AndreaJLee.com.

Paula: That way people can find you. I'll link that all up. I just want to take a moment here as we wrap and thank you so much for taking time from your busy schedule. I know you've also learned how to create space, as you were taking time off this summer and allowing things to gestate, which I think is awesome modeling. People always say: How can you take time off? You have to decide to.

Andrea: You are so right about that.

Paula: Thanks for all the inspiration, encouragement, shaping, molding, and occasional little bits of ass kicking to help me birth this podcast. It's chugging along now for a few months.

Andrea: It's a fantastic, really neat thing. You're touching on themes that I think are not being touched on elsewhere. It's a service that you're doing for all the rest of us. I hope you'll keep going. Paula, your business is a real work of art that's continuing to emerge. I hope that you know how grateful I am as someone who has walked with you on your journey. You do what you do, in all the ways you do, you do it in an exceptional way that adds a lot of value. Thank you for that.

Paula: Thank you. I appreciate the kind words.