

Audio Transcript for Episode 513: “Getting Honest + Going to Therapy” with singer-songwriter Andy Grammer

Please note: This transcript has been lightly edited to remove filler words or sounds.

ANDY GRAMMER: I think most of my songs are grounded in pain, and the rebellion of uplifting, hope, optimism, in the face of things that are really shitty and difficult, that's something that I can get behind. It's funny, I know that sometimes I'm seen as the happy guy. And the people that come to my shows, and my incredible fan base, they're happy, but they're also usually using the music because they're going through something terrible.

[music playing]

CHAD MOSES: You're listening to the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast, a show about mental health and the things that make us human. I'm your host Chad Moses, and in each episode, we'll be talking about the things that can often feel hard to talk about, like depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. We'll be sharing stories and exploring big themes like hope, healing, and recovery. If any of the topics we discuss or the stories we share feel too heavy for you, know that it's OK to pause, restart, or stop altogether. As we discover new stories, we hope to remind you that your story is important.

[music playing]

CHAD: Being vulnerable is no easy task. Sharing our pain and fears and struggles can make us feel exposed, weak, and susceptible to others' criticisms. Add in our own personal stigmas against things like therapy and vulnerability, and getting honest ends up being one heck of a challenge. Today, we have the honor and pleasure of talking to singer-songwriter Andy Grammer about his experience with all of the above. Andy talks about the grief of losing his mother in 2009, but how caring for his own mental health didn't enter his reality in a big way until 2020 due to the pandemic. As a pretty lively and energetic person who sings a lot of uplifting and catchy tunes on stage, Andy also shares how he has and is using music to make room for the heavier things in life, too.

On the off-chance you're *not* familiar with Andy Grammer, he's a multi-platinum artist who continues to engage, energize, and empower audiences with stomping stadium-size pop anthems meant to be shared at full volume. His observations and affirmations pick people back up when they need it, affirm their potential, and encourage them to keep going. His catalog consists of numerous hits, including the quadruple-platinum single “Honey, I'm Good” and the platinum singles “Keep Your Head Up,” “Fine By Me,” “Don't Give Up On Me,” “Fresh Eyes,” and “Good To Be Alive”—just to name a few.

And before we get to the conversation, we just want to thank those of you listening for showing up and tuning in this whole season. We hope you enjoy the last episode of season five. With that being said, let's get started.

[music playing]

CHAD

Andy, thank you so much for taking the time to join us. We are thrilled to be here. I guess, let's start with where here is, where are you calling in from?

ANDY

Thank you so much for that intro. It's always so funny to have a sincere conversation with someone and we have to do the intro. Some people don't know what's going on or know who I am, which is many of. But it's also a very funny way to start a conversation, to be like, 'I'm awesome in all these ways. Nice to meet ya.' Anyways, I'm coming at you from Los Angeles.

CHAD

Excellent. Excellent. Well, we're thrilled to have you. And I guess a little bit of context, a little bit of backing up. How did you get to this place? How did you first get connected to To Write Love on Her Arms?

ANDY

Man, I feel like we've been connected for a long time. I remember we brought some shirts out on tour. Yeah, there's been a relationship that I don't know exactly how many years, but a while now.

CHAD

It's got to be over a decade. Honestly, I was trying to go back to 'when did I first become aware of this artist, that I'm aware of on the radio popping up into some of our email conversations, into some of our staff meetings?' So thank you so much for allowing us to be part of the journey.

ANDY

It's been a good friendship, for sure.

CHAD

I guess hopping into the conversation. You know, for those of you that have been tracking with the podcast this year, we've covered a ton of ground, but our hope is really just to hone in on what makes us human. There's so much about life that we don't talk about, which can be a shame, because there's so much of life that is common experience, even in the hard times. And you know, Andy, like so many of your songs, like I mentioned in the intro, are these kinds of foot stomping anthems, these things that make you excited, these things that bring a smile to your face, but at the same time, I have to believe that you are more complex than just happy Andy. To what degree is it important, in you and your artistry to paint a full picture of the human experience?

ANDY

What I try to sing about I call it like a grounded optimism. So to me, it is a pretty full picture. The idea of singing, keep your head up. Unless that's grounded in pain, then I don't think anyone believes it. When I wrote that song, I wasn't singing, you gotta keep your head up, because everything's fine. It was 'Oh, I just lost my mother. I'm 25. And I need to write myself a little pick-me-up.' So I think most of my songs are grounded in pain, and the rebellion of uplifting, hope, optimism, in the face of things that are really shitty and difficult. That's something that I can get behind. Just kind of, let's all be happy, just because, sure, do that too, but I don't want to sing about that. It's not as interesting to me. You know, it's funny, I know that sometimes I'm seen as the happy guy, and the people that come to my shows, and my incredible fan base, they're happy, but they're also usually using the music because they're going through something terrible. So it's this really interesting dichotomy of like, my fans are like the sweetest people that are usually going through intense stuff.

CHAD

Yeah, we're coming off of a season of super hectic travel. Just last week. Our team was at four different events over the same weekend and most are those revolving around music and, you know, looking at the people that have bought tickets and people that showed up, I imagine them fitting into one of two camps,

either, hey, this is a treat, like, this is a birthday gift. This is an anniversary present. This is commemorating a raise or graduation, you name it. And then there's people that are there that are treating this as a retreat, you know, trying to make sense of life, trying to find a sense of groundedness. And maybe we can dare to hope that it could be optimistic as well. And, you know, maybe there's a third camp where it's both that we don't always get to pick, what kind of story we're waking up to.

ANDY

I love the relationship of musician or artist to fan, and it's a really deep one, and if you're not in it, it looks crazy to someone who's outside who doesn't get it, who doesn't understand it. For me, there's plenty of styles of music that I love, a lot of them. But there's ones that I just wouldn't necessarily go to. Because it doesn't speak to me. And if I went to the show, and I saw people crying or freaking out to something that doesn't speak to me, it looks a little bit crazy. Like that, that relationship is so great. And ultimately, what it means is, when someone comes to a show, and they sing at the top of their lungs, and they have these emotions, it means that they feel understood, or they feel like something about what I'm singing and hopefully that what I'm singing is coming from my truth, their truth, in my truth. And I've done that many times at different shows. And that is so powerful, that it creates this insane rush of feelings. And that's what like, that's why concerts to me are the dream. Like that's why it's so fun. You know, I went and saw Lauryn Hill at the Hollywood Bowl. For young people, go check her out, okay, don't don't make me date myself. But she was the first person that I heard make integrity sound banging, and really cool. And so I remember listening to that, in my mom's minivan hearing that Miseducation of Lauryn Hill record, and being like, 'Whoa, My insides are like, excited, and I feel like I want to go do something like that. I know, it won't sound like that. But she's making integrity sound cool. And I know how hard that is to do.' And then when she came out, she just walks out on stage at the Hollywood Bowl, and I'm in tears. I'm flooded. I'm like, 'There's a person that doesn't know me. But she *gets* me, something about her gets something about me and I don't feel alone in my pursuit of different things.' I think that's what the magic is, really music makes you not feel alone.

CHAD

You're right, like the magic in feeling less alone, maybe even the magic of finding different melodies to put to the words that maybe we've been able to find through some of our grief or through some of our hard times. I kind of want to take a beat and press in harder on this, keep your head up piece. Like you said, the value of that song comes from the realization that it's not always easy to keep your head up. Yeah, where did this song and the writing of it, you know, as far as chronology come into play in terms of your journey with grief through losing your mother back in 2009?

ANDY

I was street performing. I did that for about four years. About two years into that my mom passed away from breast cancer. It was so important for someone who's going to have a career like me. Listen, I would trade it in a second, I want my mom back. I was just in yoga today, they had the savasana at the end and you get completely quiet with yourself. And I'm like, 'oh, I just really miss my mother still, always.' But I was the quiet guy for two years. I'm not usually the quiet guy, I'm annoyingly chatty, and love to be around a lot of people. So I got a lot of empathy from the passing of my mother, of how hard life could be for other people. I think that's really important, if you're gonna go try to cheer people up, uplift people or you're going to try to write music that points up towards the sun. Unless you have some empathy and some understanding, you're just so annoying. You know, it's like, really annoying if you don't have a real sense of why someone's upset. And so for me to go through a year, two years, three years of really gaining empathy eyes just like, being destroyed, and understanding like, 'oh, whoa, a lot of people that I'm coming in contact with, throughout my day, might feel some version of this, it'll be different for them, but they feel this low. That is a starting place for uplifting music that I can get behind. If you're gonna sing

'keep your head up', you better mean it. Or else it's really cheesy. You know, if you sit down and you play a major chord it's cheesier than if you play a minor chord. So if you're gonna be messing around with major chords, you better be good at it, number one. And you better have a reason why.

CHAD

You talked about this 'gaining empathy eyes', what a beautiful turn of phrase that is. It's clear that, you know, 2009 was not the first and not the last heartache that you've had. You've also mentioned that mental health really came to the forefront just in the past couple of years. The pandemic. Can you tell us about how those couple years really unfolded and seasoned your sense of experience and empathy as it relates to mental health challenges?

ANDY

For me, specifically, you hit stop on everything, and I was forced to just be with myself, it was excruciating. You know, up until that point, there was a lot of 'go, go, go', a lot of consistent running. Literally just like physically running from plane to plane, country to country, running at a high clip. There was a lot of my self-worth being based on achievement. And so when you hit stop on that, like a hard stop on that, I was faced with just being quiet with myself, and I did not like it. I felt like a monkey in a cage at all times. Like rattling, 'Let me get out of here.' It was really brutal for me. To not be able to go do what I do. What I could sense was that it wasn't just, 'oh, you're sad, because you don't get to go play shows'. It was like 'you're having an internal crisis.' What your position is, and who you are and what you do throughout your day, and it was *not good* up there. And it got so bad that I, you know, this is what I think we talk about a lot and I'm starting to get louder about it, is that it doesn't have to get *that* bad for you to take some steps towards your mental health, to see that as a priority. I never heard it once growing up, and I've heard it more. So there's been work done, which is really cool. But still even with that, you know, there's a sense of, 'Oh, if I get into therapy, if I talk to someone about this, I'm kind of giving in to something or I'm admitting that I'm not whole or some bullshit that is just obnoxious.'

CHAD 13:57

I love that your sense of, you know, prescribing to your listeners, like it don't have to get unbearable before you ask for help, and I can hear that that comes from your own battle, not just your internal crisis, but also this weird, really insidious voice of stigma that's standing in the way. I'm wondering, what was the turning point? Maybe it wasn't just one flashbulb moment. But what were the voices? What was the journey like, for you to *challenge* that stigma?

ANDY

For me, it was a long pandemic. So after a year and a half of being so off of what I understood my center to be, you know, like I'm a bubbly uplifting. That's where I like to be at. And without a lot of situations where that was occurring, it was just me with myself. And I was not happy. There were no distractions, the distractions were gone. And I could really see that like, 'Whoa, I'm not doin' so hot.' And there's no distractions that I can use that work for me here. So I'm currently just sitting in mental pain. And I'd rather not be. And so I think that's what this is, I think that's what you know, early stages of depression, and so I reached out and got a therapist, and it's been really wonderful. It's been really, really wonderful. You know, you have to create space to do things in your life. If I want to write songs, they don't just roll out, I gotta set a time on the calendar, to go write a song. I have to get with somebody else sometimes, if I feel like I'm not going to do it enough by myself, then we set a session to write. I'm really into creating spaces in your life to get the things that you want. And so that it became pretty clear, like why I need to make some time for this in my life.

CHAD

You mentioned seeing a therapist, but I struggled to imagine that that was, you know, a direct 'A to B' journey of, 'okay, this hurts, I will see my first therapist tomorrow,' like, what did it look like? Were there intermediary voices along the way that encouraged this?

ANDY

My manager, he's been going to therapy for a while, and he's a close friend that I was able to chat with. And he recommended a good therapist that I use, to this day, still. And then the process of going through therapy was like letting go, like figuring out how to even do it. It's a strange situation to just share, without trying to be charming to the person or to care what they're – you know, it's like a whole thing that you got to work out.

CHAD

I can only imagine, as someone whose business card says entertainer, right, like it is your job to be charming, it is your job to be relatable. And it certainly helps, you know, your bottom line, if when you leave an encounter someone feels better than when you first interacted with them. Did it feel like the tables were flipped that you were sitting, for the first time in the chair of someone that needed to be helped, as opposed to doing the helping? I mean, I guess what comes to my mind is so many people say, 'Oh, music is my therapy, shows are my therapy.' And you're saying 'well, that makes me the therapist at times.'

ANDY

A lot of humility from the pandemic to now that I've hopefully gained. For me personally, I think we all have things about how we see ourselves. And then we have things that we still are, that we choose not to look at. It's like we cook our own books internally. And I think sometimes it's really nice to have someone help you get all of that on the same page. And to get your full true self onto this one sheet here, okay that's not a good analogy, but that comes with humility. Because nobody wants to admit that they have these flaws, it's easier to just not look at them. And that's where I think a lot of us go to distractions, because there's something inside that doesn't quite feel right.

CHAD

Thinking back to your first minute of your first counseling session, your first seconds of therapy. How different does that look now, years into this journey of refinding yourself?

ANDY

There's a lot more compassion for myself. There's a lot less black and white thinking, a lot less 'I'm a good person or a I'm bad person.' There's a lot more gray in the middle, and a lot more compassion and self-love in my everyday life. You know, can hold some complex ideas at once.

CHAD

We are in an age where music is coming back at a very visible and frenetic pace. I remember when festivals first started coming back and venues started opening and all of a sudden there's a shortage of sound equipment. There is a shortage of tour buses and people running back of house spaces and all of that. What was it like to re-enter this world, seemingly, you know, kind of overnight, like we got into isolation overnight. And a lot of people got to ramp up to their job, you know, through remote work. But with a touring musician, it was 'alright, we're back.' What was that whiplash like?

ANDY

That was pretty wild. I was just thinking in my head, something that I wanted to share with anybody listening, which had a huge effect on me. Someone told me one time that if you judge yourself for seeking

help, then when you are helping someone else, you are judging them. Because what you're saying is that help is worthy of judgment. And I love to help people. Like I love it. It's one of my favorites to be of service to someone. Oh, my God, that usually makes me so happy. And to think that I was judging myself for that was another turning point for me. It was like, 'oh, man, I need to get in the game here. It can't just be one sided conversations.' You know, there's got to be like, a letting go. That I know if you asked me point blank, 'Are you above other people?' I'm like, 'Oh, my God, I'm definitely not above other people.' But that's what you're saying, when you say 'I don't need help.' Anyways, onto your question of getting back into music. It was actually, it was very strange, because we went back in a little bit early. So we were still like, bubbled up on the tour bus. But we were just so happy to be able to get out of the house at all, that it was still kind of incredible.

CHAD

So what did it look like now, getting into the rhythm of therapy, and then refinding this rhythm of frenetic tour days and travel and press and PR? Everything that does not include being on the stage singing and playing guitar.

ANDY

You know, it's really simple. It's not like, I don't know, it doesn't feel like rocket science. It's like hey, we just had a call the other day where we looked at my schedule with my incredible managers, and we're like, 'oh, if I do all these things, I'm gonna be unhappy.' There's too many things here. There's not enough sleep here. This is how it's gonna go. Like, those aren't conversations necessarily, that I would take seriously before. And I just have a little more self love, a little more self-compassion, a little more understanding that it's not rocket science. And if you just leave it up to, if you're not setting yourself up for success with thoughts to your mental health, not just like, 'Oh, can I do that physically? Could I make it, all those cities?' Like, I probably could, but I know how that will make me feel. So now a priority is I don't want to feel bad. So now it's like, a little bit more integrated into the way that we do stuff.

ANDY

But until you are able to acknowledge yourself fully, then you just do a lot of, 'I can take it. I got this. Don't sweat.' Like, there's got to be a balance between hard work and that stuff.

CHAD

Dude you are totally reading my mail. Like, I feel very seen in this moment. My self care's most consistent sparring partner is a fear of missing out, and it's not even for myself, for my own edification. But like, man, if I don't make it to this city, to this date, if I don't hop on this plane in order to get to this event, what are the stories I'm missing out on? Who are the people that I could encourage? Who are the people that I need to give this resource material out to? And toeing that line of ambition and just letting it go, trusting the machinery that's already going.

ANDY

Very intense, tightrope walk. Because, if you don't have ambition, well people are just worried that you're not going to get up and go do it. So you need enough gas to get you going to go do stuff. The problem is that sometimes that thing can also be secretly driven by trying to get validation outside of yourself. Right? So like, I need to go do this for these people. Right, for these other people, which oh my god, you do, you totally do. But if you're not worried about yourself. You know, I've been on two tours this year called 'The Art of Joy, Part One and Two'. And I dug deep into joy, that word just kept swelling around me when I was depressed. Like, it makes sense. And my favorite definition of joy is gladness not based on circumstance. So if it's gonna not be based on circumstance, that means that it is coming from you. Then I see that and I go, 'Whoa, I need to get better at having gladness not based on circumstance. A lot of my gladness

comes from.. It's clearly shown from the pandemic, if you change my circumstance, I am NOT cool! I'm not good. In the current form. If you change my circumstance this hard, I'm not glad, there's no gladness around me. I'm just freaking depressed and upset. And that was a really cool wake up call to go, 'Oh, I'm capable. I'm not crazy. I can do this.' It's like this interesting, invisible, weird internal work, to try to figure that out. And I'm not there. But I'm taking steps.

[music playing]

BECKY EBERT: Hey there, it's Becky Ebert, TWLOHA's editor and producer. I want to talk to you for a moment about something specific: T-shirts. To Write Love on Her Arms has always sold t-shirts as a way to help fund our mission—the mission of hope and help. But the products we sell in our store do so much more than help us financially. Each piece of merchandise is a conversation starter. It spreads the TWLOHA message to someone who may not have found out about us otherwise. So whether you wear our shirts, hats, hoodies, or rain jackets, we want to thank you for bringing a message of hope and help wherever you go. To see our latest designs, head to store.twloha.com now and use the promo code PODCAST20 to receive 20% off your entire order.

[music playing]

CHAD

This conversation has been so fun, because in part, you are doing a masterclass on emotional vocabulary. And, you know, taking words that we have learned at an early age, I mean, we learned the word joy by the time we're walking, right? And you're laying out this journey that's decades in process of 'what does it *mean*'?

ANDY

To the average listener, when you hear the word joy, if you're honest with yourself, what does that make you think of? Does it make you think of an accomplishment? Does it make you think of a place that you're at? Does it make you think of a person that comes into your situation that makes you so happy? Is your first thought... 'me, me with myself? Just because. Because I've figured myself out. I've learned myself well enough to be joyful.' That's a deeper level. I don't know if I can get there without getting completely demolished by a pandemic. I honestly... I'm not sure. That was such a unique historical event. At the current stage of my life, there are so many places to go and create situations where I would feel happy. You know, what joy? Was it coming from me? I don't know, unless you take it all away. Whether I'm forced to figure that out.

CHAD

I guess keeping with the theme of changing context and learning deeper layers to words. And yeah, just kind of, what is the meaning of all of this? Pick what your 'this' is. Have songs that you've sung for decades now... do they sound different to you? Same words, same chord progression, same everything, but the context has changed. I guess my question is, have you felt that change? What's changed the most? Do you have songs that you don't want to sing anymore? And do you have songs that you can't wait to get to, because there's this nugget of depth that you never knew was there until these last couple years?

ANDY

To me, I love singing about the soul. And I even get worried saying that, because there's no manipulation. There's no attempt at trying to get you to be... I have... I just, me personally, going back to joy, right?

What psyches me up is singing about our journey here.. and how... the soul basically. So the songs that don't have that in them in some form, are not my favorites as we move forward. And there's soul in literally so many different things. Like it can be your first love, there's a lot of beauty in that. As long as there's something in there that feels connected. I think as an artist, it's really hard. You don't know that, when you start, you don't know what it is that you want to write about. Maybe some do. I didn't. I'm hacking away on Third Street Promenade going, 'is *this* what it is?' Or 'is *this* what it is?' Or 'is *this* maybe what it is?' And there's a fearlessness that has to come. If you've been prolific enough, you have ones that you look back at and you go 'Oh, I mean, I know where I was and why I made that choice. But that one doesn't get me psyched right now. This one super does.' And that's what's so incredible about music, is that everybody wants to come hear your life's work every night. The best of everything that you've created. Over the last 10 years. They want just those songs, which I think is almost kind of a unique art form. I've been thinking about this a lot. Like if you're an actor, it's 'no, show up and this is a new movie. We're doing *this* now. We're not doing callbacks to what crushed five years ago.' But music is very unique. That every night, everybody wants to hear the best of everything you've ever done.

ANDY

It's cool, but if you don't play "Keep Your Head Up", which I wrote so long ago, everybody would be like, 'What the hell, dude?'

CHAD

Yeah, there's this currency and consistency when it comes to music.

ANDY

I've always been lucky enough to have a good amount of *myself* in my music. I think hopefully, it's gotten better and better as I've shared more and more. Kind of like a relationship with a friend. You first meet them, and fireworks happen. And you're like, super friends, and it's cool. And then hopefully, as you get to know them for four years, five years, six years, seven, ten, you start to feel comfortable to share more and more and more and more and deeper, and all the sides of yourself.

CHAD

Have you been able to kind of express that sense of sharing of vulnerability to your other tourmates, to other folks that you write music with, that you collaborate with? How has your journey into self-care and therapy and seeking positive mental health well being... How has that affected or opened up lanes of communication with your co-workers in the field of music?

ANDY

The music, I think, is what did it. So going through therapy, then it was like, oh, then I have a song, I start my show with a spoken word poem. And that goes into a song called 'Damn, It Feels Good To Be Me.' And there's a song in the show called 'Love Myself', and 'Joy'. So, doing self work has undeniably spilled into my music, which then spills into the conversation with me and my fans, my band, and everybody. And the deeper you go with yourself, hopefully, the more universal you become to other people. That's the hope.

CHAD

That's something that strikes me as beautiful. And I don't know, if in an age that we've had to live through a pandemic, and an age that I'm, you know, living through a hurricane, it really puts things in perspective. If it's not beautiful, how worthy of my time, is it? And it doesn't mean it's going to be easy to find that beauty. Shouldn't that be what's kind of driving what we're looking for?

ANDY

I think beauty is such a wide spectrum. So I think if you're creating something or you're a creator, it's more like authenticity. The more authentic you are. If you being completely authentic, is so silly and stupid? But it's true? I want that. The scariest thing is when we are dimming our own light down to try to fit into a situation, especially in art. That just makes the art terrible. Just makes it not good. And something about going through therapy, building up my own self-worth coming from me, as opposed to external things, has allowed me to care less, like *sincerely* care less how I'm perceived, which is wonderful. That's so good for art. Oh my god. Walking out on stage, I'm like, ***'This is what I am. And I hope that you enjoy this, and oh my god, it would make me so happy if you like it, if you don't, that's okay.'*** We're all gonna be okay. That's what we want, I think, from our artists, is 'I'm here to do *this*. I hope you enjoy it.'

CHAD

I hate to keep coming back to the beautiful aspiration that is. The desire to be authentic, and the freedom to not care if it's not fully received, because it was coming from a place that *you* accepted and the importance of that. I don't imagine that revelation came solely through work and music. So what are the other kinds of threads in your life that help you express your best self, or help you *find* elements of your best self?

ANDY

The actual act of going to therapy, and then writing music about it. And then being backstage, knowing that I have to go sing about it to start a show, was such an interesting practice. I did 61 tour shows this year, and every night started with this poem of, 'this is where I'm at, this is who I am, if you want to leave the door is over there, if you're not into it. I've been beat down so badly that I can't pretend to be anything else than where I am at this exact moment.' And that has been, you know, almost like a spiritual practice *every night* to just share where you're at. And I just had a really interesting thing where I went and played for a bunch of people. I was in a situation where you recognized everybody in the room. And some people like it, and some people do not like it. And if you catch me 10 years earlier, I might start on stage going, 'oh, what can I do? That will get everyone in here. Like what do *they* want, what will work for them?' In essence, veering off what I think I'm supposed to do. After a year of doing shows, connecting to joy comes from... from me. So it comes from in here. And I can't get my validation from you. So it has to come from me. So I'm going to just hold space for half of you to frickin' love this, and hold space for half of you to detest this and maybe get up and leave. And I'm cool. Like, I'm actually fine. And I think that's what people can feel. And this is what, to me, actually has a lot to do with mental health. Once you get past the worry of judging, especially judging yourself, there's like a lot of open space to play with here.

CHAD

I love this idea of making and holding space. Even that last word that you said of play. Obviously you can draw the line (the metaphorical lines) between yeah, you *play* music, but it's also your career. It doesn't feel like a playground. Or maybe it does again now. There was certainly, I reckon, this gap between when you were busking on Promenade, and where we are now. I'm hearing that those spots are closer today than perhaps they've been *ever*. Just playing, trying to find this joy, trying and tapping into that. And realizing like, you could be busking and maybe you make 100 bucks that day. 'Hell yeah, this is validation, I'm doing what I'm supposed to do.' And somewhere in the middle, we lose it.

ANDY

I just want to speak to, as well, the word that I've been sitting a lot with, is authenticity. When you are truly authentic, you're giving other people permission to be authentic. That's what the gift of authenticity is like. When I am truly my full self, just by being around me. Or if it's you that's doing it, you're giving me permission to go like, 'Oh, cool, maybe I could just be myself.' And I think that with the stigma around

therapy, there's a huge hurdle. Because a huge part of myself, I'm not allowed to talk about or to share, or this ugly stuff that I keep away. And there's just real freedom to see it all and accept yourself for where you're at. It's not the incredible story that you tell yourself all the time. But the fact that it's not that is what creates so much internal tension, because you're like, 'I'm supposed to be *this thing*'. And then I take actions that are *this thing*. And now uh oh, right? There's a lot more self-compassion, and there's a way to hold it all, and to really learn yourself. There's a real power in it. I would cheer anyone on who is going through that struggle right now. Start learning yourself; and one of the easiest ways to learn yourself is to sit with a therapist and get into it.

CHAD

Well, on my note sheet is the question, 'What would you say to someone who's struggling right now?' I think you just did. I think you just said it. Knocked it out of the park. I guess you know, to that end. It's now open mic time for Andy Grammer. Is there anything that we haven't touched on that you really wish that you could have expressed? I don't know man, this has covered so much.

ANDY

If you're listening and you're feeling low, and you haven't quite taken a step to get into therapy, or to get into a 12 step program, which are incredible, or some sort of a group, you are going to be with yourself for the rest of your life. So it's kind of the most important relationship you got. And it is unbelievable to me how little context I had on myself before I kind of like, imploded during this pandemic. And I'm just so grateful to take it seriously to learn my habits, my flaws, my personal defects, my... what I'm really good at. I just don't think about it. Where like, if you don't create the space for it, you will just continue going forward, sometimes in pain. If part of what's holding you back is some bullshit stigma that you are weak, or not as worthy, or not as good, if you have these things. Newsflash, everybody's got this stuff. So let's blow the door off that, and just start learning ourselves, and learning how to be happy from ourselves to get to the good joy stuff.

CHAD

Who are you listening to? Who are some artists that you feel when your authenticity gas tank is starting to run low? Who are the voices? What are the songs that reground you? The soundtrack to your authenticity.

ANDY

Leif Vollebakk is really good. He's got a couple of songs that like... smash. I'm really into Alexi Murdoch. I'm into a lot of guitar... kind of like chill stuff at the moment.

ANDY

And then I listen to a lot of like, you know, I'm a baha'i. So their spiritual teacher. I read a bunch of Abdul Baha's writings. There's an incredible teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh. All of his books are on audiobook. That dude centers me like nobody else. Trying to get better at meditating. Again, if you don't take steps and create space in your life for it, it just won't happen. That's been my experience. So step one is to make it a priority. That's like, 'oh, the way that I feel up here, why wouldn't that be a priority?' What does it say about myself? That I can't make that a priority? So that's step one, I'd say.

[music playing]

CHAD: It's with the utmost gratitude that we thank Andy for giving us his time and energy to make this conversation possible. We're honored to bear witness to your mental health journey as both an artist and as a human. Your willingness to speak up and out is something we admire and appreciate endlessly.

And of course, I'd love to thank Becky Ebert for her incredible editing, the entire team at Sound on Sound Off for the mixing and production, and to each of our guests this season for your bravery, heart and desire to see your stories collide with others.

And of course, to you, our listeners, thank you for making season five of the TWLOHA Podcast a pleasure to record, produce, and publish. We are so so glad you're here and we look forward to connecting with you again real soon. If there are topics or things you'd like for us to discuss in 2023, we're all ears, please send us an email at podcast@twloha.com. We'd also love to hear what your favorite episode was from this season. Your feedback means so much to us, as does your continued support. So on behalf of the entire team of To Write Love On Her Arms, thank you, thank you, thank you. We'll see you again real soon. We're glad you're here.

[music playing]

CHAD: We hope this episode has been a reminder that your story is important, you matter, and that you're not alone.

If you're struggling right now, know that it's OK to reach out and that there are people who want to help. Part of our mission is to connect people to the help they need and deserve. You can find local mental health resources on our website twloha.com. That's T-W-L-O-H-A.com. And Click [FIND HELP](#) at the top of the page.

If you're in the US or Canada and need to talk to someone right now, you can always text our friends at Crisis Text Line. Simply text the word TWLOHA—that's T W L O H A—to 741741. You'll be connected to a crisis counselor. It's free, confidential, and available 24/7. For a list of crisis support resources for listeners living outside of the United States, please visit TWLOHA.com and click on the [international resources](#) tab.

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A big thank you to our friends at Copeland for the original music on this episode. The To Write Love on Her Arms podcast is produced by Rebecca Ebert. Music assistance was provided by James Likeness and Ben Tichenor. And again, I'm Chad Moses, thank you so much for listening. We're glad you're here.

[music outro]