

## Black and White Episode 1: I Am Worthy Of Hope

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

**CHAD MOSES** [over music]: 52 weeks later, I'm at the same festival. She walks up, she goes, 'Hey, you probably don't remember me.' And I called her by name. I said, 'Absolutely, I remember you. How are you doing?' She goes, 'Well, I'm doing pretty great. I just got 52 weeks.' And it's like, man, like, in this moment, this, this poor young woman had thought that she had given up her last bit of hope. She, I can't imagine the, the, the amount of strength it took her, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day to get to three months all for it to come undone in a place that was unfamiliar, surrounded by strangers, thinking that she had just wrecked everything.

And in sharing that vulnerable moment opened herself up to someone else, a crowd of 15 other people, believing in something better for her...and that sustained her for a full year. So I don't think that would fit into Webster's dictionary for what hope is, but that's hope for me."

**LINDSAY KOLSCH**: You're listening to the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast, a show about mental health and things that make us human. We'll be sharing stories and conversations about topics we tend not to talk about, like depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. With so much gray area in the world today, we feel it's important to draw a line in the sand when it comes to a few of the things we believe about people and mental health. Last May, during Mental Health Awareness Month, we highlighted four statements that have guided TWLOHA's mission since day one. This year, we're focusing on four more statements:

I Am Worthy of Hope  
It Is OK to Ask for Help  
Your Story Is Important

And finally

We Need You Here.

*[music playing]*

**LINDSAY**: At TWLOHA, we believe these four statements are non-negotiable. To us, these statements are Black and White. And in honor of Mental Health Month, we've created a special miniseries featuring four episodes to highlight each statement. We're going to be sharing a bit more about what those words mean to us and this movement. We'll be highlighting a few action steps you can take that are also inspired by these words. To learn more about what TWLOHA is doing this month, you can read the 'Black and White' blog post and check out our merch collection on [twloha.com](http://twloha.com).

Today I'm gonna be joined by Chad Moses, a member of our team. You heard his voice at the top of this episode with an excerpt for that blog. We hope this conversation is encouraging, and we're excited to share it with you.

[music playing]

**LINDSAY:** A quick warning on this episode: There is some strong language used. So please consider that before listening.

[music playing]

**LINDSAY:** Hey guys, this is Lindsay Kolsch. I'm your host for the TWLOHA podcast. I'm joined today by our very own Chad Moses. Chad is the Director of Outreach and someone we've had the pleasure of having on our team for more than 10 years. And so we're excited to keep the conversations going this week about the Black and White Collection. It is in honor of Mental Health Month. And the phrase we're going to talk about today, the phrase we're going to focus on, is 'I Am Worthy Of Hope.' Chad, I'm going to kick it to you here and let you kind of give us the first look at what that means.

**CHAD:** With To Write Love on Her Arms, so often people associate us with our social media or with our website. And you know, when you have conversations revolving around worth online, oftentimes you get this kind of defensive response to it. *'Well, you don't know me. You don't know what I'm worth.'* However, every single time this phrase has come up in conversation at a booth, the hope kind of wins the day.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** That, yeah, there's been times I've been at a music festival and remind someone, *'Hey, you know, you're, you're worth the help, you're worth the hope that you are seeking.'* And they say, *'no, no, I've messed up too many times'* and I just repeat it: *'No, I believe that you're worthy of hope.'* And normally that dissolves into tears and hugs, but it's a phrase that doesn't always impact deeply on the first go around. So yeah, we're inviting you to, to repeat it. We're inviting you to write it down. We're inviting you to have someone speak it to you, at you, even. But yeah, this is not something that we're going to budge on, that you still breathing is proof of the hope that, that is available to you. It's proof of the hope that we see time and time again with every email that comes in, with every handshake at every booth. We see too much hope to believe in a world in which it doesn't exist.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. I think for me, this phrase, it means a couple things to me, obviously, but the piece that keeps coming back when I look at it...well, one, it's one of the four statements we've been looking at and we will look at this month, it's the one that is an 'I' statement, and I think that's important: *I am worthy of hope* so knowing that hope is the thing that kind of makes it all possible. Right? It keeps you going. It keeps your story keep going. It keeps you moving

towards help. It keeps you moving toward recovery, whatever that looks like. Without hope. I think that it's fair to say you become hopeless. And, and that we know is one of the greatest risks to people dying by suicide, for people just struggling. Like that is...hopelessness is a real risk factor. And not to be too clinical about it, another way to say it might be: Without hope, people actually don't thrive and they, and they don't survive. And so when we say you're worthy of hope, we're saying that you are worthy of a story to keep going. You are worthy of tomorrow. You deserve to have the opportunity to keep going. And hope is a hard word, I think for some people because it, it escapes us.

**LINDSAY:** I think as humans it's the thing we need, like fundamentally we need, but we also don't know how to describe it all the time. So we describe it in experiences, in moments, in feelings. And so because it escapes us, it's not this, it's not this, like, physical thing you can see and look at, we have to do a lot of storytelling around it but we need it. We fundamentally need hope to move forward as, as humans. I think that's just wired in us. And so when we say you're worthy of that, we're really saying you, you deserve it. In your existence, as you breathe, means that this is available to you. And if you, if you don't know where to find it, we're gonna, we're gonna do our best to point to it, but you 100% are...will always be worthy of hope.

**CHAD:** Yeah. And it reminds me of another phrase that we brought up a little under a year ago. We had a lot of fun with this shirt. It was called Universal.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** And we had maybe, like, two dozen different languages represented on this shirt that all said, "hope." And looking back on the shirt now, we say this word hope, and I'm not even gonna try to pronounce it in all those different languages...but I'm also wondering, like, what kind of contexts rest with that word 'hope.' Across the board, globally, everyone has a word for what we call 'hope.' But you're right, that—

**LINDSAY:** What does it look like? What's it's going to feel like? What can it be?

**CHAD:** Yeah. So while it's universal, while it's wide reaching, while everyone has this mental picture of what hope looks like, it's also specific. It's also catered to your experience that maybe hope looks like just getting through this next hour.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** Or this next day—

**LINDSAY:** Exactly.

**CHAD:** Or maybe hope has a bit of a wider horizon and in any of those instances, yeah. You're worthy of that hope. This isn't something that, that you've earned. It's something that is, is

granted to you. You are allowed to have this sense of, of belief. You're allowed to have the ability to daydream. You're allowed to share the things that make you smile.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah, for sure. And I, I think about this word a lot actually, hope, which makes sense. That's kind of one of the two sort of foundational things that To Write Love stands on: hope and help, right? And so hope being the, the one that kind of leads the way in a lot of these situations or stories that we encounter.

**CHAD:** So you, you brought it back to our mission statement. So if you are just tuning in for the first time at this podcast and you're wondering who we are, what we do, we describe our activity as one that presents hope and finds help. And whenever we get new interns, I'm always the one that's there, like saying, '*memorize this, memorize this statement. This will help explain to your friends and family what the heck you're doing down here.*' But I think that those words are super intentional. Uh, so yes, we find help. We point you in the direction of the actual places where help is available. It's not so easy with hope.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. I'm wondering in your life, what things have given you hope and maybe describe the experience, like physical, emotional, like can you put yourself in a place or in a time and a season where you were like, 'that gave me hope'?

**CHAD:** Yeah, so for the past 11 years, I've had the opportunity to tour for To Write Love on Her Arms, going to music festivals, and there are festivals that I still put on our calendar because I hope to see people there, people that I've met in years past. I'm thinking of Emily. I haven't seen Emily in two years, but I hope to this year. I don't know how she's doing. Emily, if you're listening, God, I love you and I hope the world is giving you plenty of things to smile about.

**LINDSAY:** Where'd you meet Emily?

**CHAD:** In New York. Western New York. Okay. Shane. I met Shane at Electric Forest two years ago and this dude just exudes honesty and energy. Shane always brings gifts, whether they're handmade bracelets. He gave me a, a clock, a handmade clock last year. And I don't hope to get a gift from Shane, but I do hope to get a hug from him this year. So, so Shane, if you're listening, man, I can't wait to see you in the ELE crew. I can't describe how, where my heart was physiologically, when you started that question and where it is now, but it's definitely raised.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** Yeah. I don't know.

**LINDSAY:** It sounds like getting to see people's stories continue or getting to have that brief window in, in their experience, like, kind of checking in with them.

**CHAD:** Yeah.

**LINDSAY:** That gives you hope personally or—

**CHAD:** Totally, totally.

**LINDSAY:** Hope for them? Like, what's, what are you...

**CHAD:** It gives me hope for them. It gives me hope for this mission that we're doing. It gives me hope for the wider conversation of mental health. It gives me hope for encouraging my team back here. One of my favorite parts of my job is sharing these stories with, with my team members. And yet like, hope doesn't have a deadline. Hope doesn't have a finish line. These hopes that I shared about Shane and Emily, there's never going to be a point where like, okay, I see them this year, that hopes done. It re-ups.

**LINDSAY:** And then I'm kind of curious, as someone, I know you, that you have struggled with depression, I'm curious if you can find a way to share the experience of what hope has meant in that specific experience and maybe different seasons.

**CHAD:** Yeah. I certainly needed people to hope on my behalf.

**LINDSAY:** Okay.

**CHAD:** Uh, for, for seasons of my life.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. Did you feel hopeless or was it like?

**CHAD:** Sure. Absolutely. It was somewhere on the spectrum between hope does not exist and hope exists for everyone but me.

**LINDSAY:** Hope does not exist as like a thing?

**CHAD:** Period.

**LINDSAY:** That's not real.

**CHAD:** People are just wandering through life as ignorantly as possible. Like, I've found the cheat code that hope doesn't exist in, am I any better for it? You know?

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** So that, that's a feeling that, that, that nihilism, that despair. And then when I would see people experience legitimate joy and hope, I would say, 'well, then they're just fools. So maybe it does exist, but, but not for me. I've, I've opted out of this.' And over time believing that that

opting out may have been permanent and that kind of sends me on that cycle again, that it just doesn't exist. And I had to be shocked awake. I had to have someone who in my, like most liminal state of wanting to give up, someone refused to give up on me.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** So whether I believed in hope or not, didn't matter, that person was hoping for me.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** That what I believed didn't matter as much—and what my friend believed didn't matter as much—as me hearing that they believed in me.

**LINDSAY:** If you couldn't believe it for yourself...

**CHAD:** I needed someone to believe it for me. And in that moment that was enough.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. And when did you start to believe it? Like when, what was the, *'okay, well, I am seeing some...'*

**CHAD:** Yeah. So if hope is believing in better things and I believe that there were no more better things... This person used their, their time, their presence, their friendship, their attention to point out the more beautiful things and the better things for me.

**CHAD:** And it started small. It started, it started with grass. It started with, with seeing grass start to come back to life when, when spring happened. It started with, it started with seeing a squirrel on my way back from class with a cigarette butt in its mouth. And that just made me laugh for the first time in months.

**LINDSAY:** Absurd. Wonderful.

**CHAD:** It was just so absurd. So I found hope in, in the absurd.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** I found hope in something that was so far out of my field of vision. So yeah, so just little, little moments. It had to start small.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** Because what I didn't need in that moment with someone giving me a grand vision for my life, like buddy, I don't know if my life is going to last more than a couple months here, so I don't need a vision on life. I just needed something right now. Right here. So yeah, so starting

small, and keeping it small. Like years later. I mean, I'm 12 years removed from, from those days. Uh, and I still get a kick out of, out of the small stuff.

[*music playing before break*]

**LINDSAY** [over music]: During Mental Health Month, we're inviting you and supporters everywhere to take this conversation into your community. The Black and White collection of t-shirts and merch is available for a limited time in the TWLOHA Online Store. You can purchase any of the four designs or purchase the collection as a whole. Every order comes with a print and info cards that you can use to start conversations and make an impact in your community. And because we love our podcast listeners, we're offering you 15% off your purchase, to be used at any time throughout the month of May. Enter May15—that's MAY15—at checkout. Thank you so much for your support.

[*music playing leading back into interview*]

**LINDSAY**: If this phrase feels like it's hard to own, like 'I Am Worthy of Hope,' if that's hard, if that's hard to own, starting small, holding onto it until the small things break through and then you can really hold it, and returning and then and then sharing hope. I think that's kind of the, the cycle that we hope to see play out over this month and then beyond that is that people could start to figure out the things that do give them hope and hold on to them. Making lists. Like we talk about some things you can even do tangibly with this month.

**LINDSAY**: Some of them are small kind of micro-actions things like: Write those down, like, have an inventory, a short little list. Like, wow, the things that brought me hope or the things that brought me out of, kind of that, the heaviness of that season...they might've been absurd. They might have been colors, they might have been a song, they might have been a friend, you know, bringing by your favorite snack on a hard day, or something very small. But I do think hope, while we can't always see it and measure it, we can start to write it down in our story and kind of integrate it into how we see where we're at. And it's OK, I don't know that you can ever have too much of it. You can certainly have too little of it. I just don't think you could have too much. So when you, when you feel overflowing and when you finally have a full cup of, of hope, then, then sharing it, like with the people you mentioned you want to see that's you wanting to give more out.

**CHAD**: Yeah. And the full cup is going to become more full drip by drip.

**LINDSAY**: Yeah.

**CHAD**: So if despair is, is assuming that the worst is going to happen, the opposite of that is not assuming the best is going to happen. It's actually just saying, '*look, not all the worst things will happen.*' So if need a win, start with just one tiny thing to break that, that losing streak, you know? So it's not a light switch. It's not binary. Life is, is analog. It's not just daytime and

nighttime, but we got dusk, we got dawn. We have these, these spaces in between. And I think that's what hope is.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** I think it's unrealistic to believe that we're ever in this life going to experience only the best things forever. But I think that hope is reminding us, *'look as bad as things get, there's a spark somewhere. There's, there's a spot somewhere. There's a squirrel with a cigarette somewhere that, that can make you smile.'* So yeah, our fight is not to make everything the best ever, but it's to interrupt, kind of, the narrative of hopelessness.

**LINDSAY:** We are encouraging people with each phrase some things that they can do. We talked and touched on a couple of these already for the 'I am worthy of hope,' some small actions people can, can take. I would probably point people first and foremost to the idea of like a little list. It's probably cheesy to call it like a 'hope chest' or 'hope list' or something like that. But you know, but something along the lines of in this moment or as you come across those moments of hope, collect them, gather them, put them all in one place: notes on your phone, something you write down. Maybe it's even just a playlist because those are the songs that, that mean the world to you. Have that for yourself. Take the time to do that for yourself.

**LINDSAY:** And so if you find yourself approaching a crossroads or a season where it's hard to believe that, you can return to the things that remind you that there is hope. That would just be one small thing you can do. The other things would be have the conversation with people who you'd feel comfortable with talking about this idea of: What is hope? What does hope look like to you? It's OK to talk about that. And perhaps that can bring our definition of hope in a personal sense, a little bit broader and kind of more inclusive of some other things. So anything else you would add to that?

**CHAD:** My brain is going to Marie Kondo right now and—

**LINDSAY:** Love her.

**CHAD:** And I think, you know, when you come to these lists, uh, you can write out the things that are giving you life, that are sparking joy, and the things that are, are draining your life. And the reality is when we're talking about issues like depression, when we talk about phases like despair, when we talk about these states that we navigate where any sense of emotion is kind of foreign: crowdsourcing, you know? Find, find people that you trust and say, *'Hey, when was the last time you remember me smiling? Do you remember what we were doing to remember what I was listening to? Do you remember what joke it was?'* And start a list with that. If you can't find that list within your own memory, that's OK. I bet there's other people around you that have been taking good notes on you. And yeah. You know, just see if there is a pattern that emerges, see if, yeah, just these things that, that you almost need to start the engine on hope.



That is going to take a couple cranks, is going to take a couple pulls on that generator to, to get it—

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** Actually firing. That all serves a purpose too. But I love that idea of finding, finding the list of things that, uh, that make me smile, that remind me I'm alive.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. And I wonder if you could share a little bit more because you are a gifted storyteller. I wonder if we could talk a little bit about even why, why, why we share stories, why we share from our blog, people writing their own stories, and why we encourage that. Um, how does that play into that sense of hope or, or the narrative here?

**CHAD:** Yeah, my favorite stories had been the unpredictable ones. And one story that I've certainly shared in other interviews and maybe even on this podcast before, but I don't care. It's my favorite story.

**CHAD:** I was at one of the nation's largest rock festivals, and someone walked by curious about who we are, what we do. I start telling the original story of Renee's first five days in recovery, and before long I had a group of 12 to 15 people sitting at the booth listening to this story. It was really kind of a magical moment of just telling a story and an audience showing up. And at the end I just said, *'Hey, does anyone have any questions?'* And this young woman, um, without even looking up, without putting up a hand, she just spoke up.

**CHAD:** She goes, uh, *'I heard the story about people finding help. I used to believe in that. Uh, I was three months clean, but I just fucked up.'* And I said, *'well, you know, I think today's a good day to start it again.'* She goes, *'You don't understand. I just came back from using, I just undid everything. I've messed all this up.'* And there's still that crowd of 15 people there. And she still hadn't lifted her head. And I said, *'well, for what it's worth, you've been standing here for 10 minutes. Let's start the clock now you've been clean for 10 minutes.'* She nodded and she walked away and several hours later she shows back up to the booth. I think Metallica was playing, so there was no one walking around. It was, uh, I was starting to count out merch, and she walks back by the booth. I said, *'hey, how are you doing?'* She goes, *'Oh, you remember me?'* I said, *'yeah, you know, I'm just curious how, how your day is going.'* She goes, *'well, I wanted to walk by to tell you that I'm on my way to the bathroom to flush the rest of my drugs. I just thought you should know.'*

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. Wow.

**CHAD:** And I'm like, my God. Like what a story. Thank you so much for sharing. 52 weeks later, I'm at the same festival. She walks up, she goes, *'Hey, you probably don't remember me.'* And I called her by name. I said, *'absolutely, I remember you. How are you doing?'* She goes, *'well, I'm doing pretty great. I just got 52 weeks.'* And it's like, man, like, in this moment that this, this

poor young woman had thought that she had given up her last bit of hope. She, I can't imagine the, the, the amount of strength, it took her, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, to get to three months all for it to come undone in a place that was unfamiliar, surrounded by strangers, thinking that she had just wrecked everything.

**CHAD:** And in sharing that vulnerable moment opened herself up to someone else, a crowd of 15 other people believing in something better for her.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah.

**CHAD:** And that sustained her for a full year, like, man. So I don't think that would fit into Webster's dictionary for what hope is. But that's hope for me. That is my definition of hope is that story at that festival spanning at least a year and now more.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah. I think that does fit actually. I would say that fits.

**CHAD:** Alright, well get on that dictionary.com.

**LINDSAY:** Yeah, Webster. You've got some work to do. Um, cool. So I want to wrap up this particular episode, kind of wondering what you would say to someone who maybe feels like this isn't true, that the statement that we are presenting as a black and white, we one-hundred percent believe is true, um, not to create arguments, but to really hold onto it the I am, I'm worthy of hope. You are worthy of hope. What would you say to that person?

**CHAD:** I'd say if that's hard to believe, we're sensitive to that. We're not going to try to make you recite a creed that you don't believe in.

**CHAD:** But I believe that you're here for a reason. And not just on this planet or existentially here for a reason. I believe you're listening to this podcast. You're on our website. You tracked with our social media because you've trusted us at some point along the way. And we're just asking for you to extend that trust just an inch further into allowing us to say: We believe that you are worthy of hope. And invite you to repeat after me: I am worthy of hope. And maybe it sounds like nonsense and that's okay. We're not going to make you believe it, but, but we'd love for you to say it. And you can say it again and you can say it again and maybe you go days without saying it, but you can push play on this podcast whenever it makes sense for you.

**CHAD:** I am not going to be crossing this finish line before you or without you, so I'm hoping that we meet up. I'm hoping that you'll see all the things that, that I see in you, in this, in us. Yeah, just, just begging you to, to trust us for a little bit longer that when we say this, we mean it: You are worthy of hope.

*[music playing]*

**LINDSAY:** Awesome. Well, thanks so much, Chad, for sharing this time with us and diving into the I Am Worth Of Hope statement.

*[music playing]*

**LINDSAY:** Thank you so much for listening to this special miniseries of the To Write Love on Her Arms podcast in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. Thank you to Chad Moses for lending your voice and your heart to this conversation. We would really encourage you to read the full 'Black and White' blog and check out our merch collection on [twloha.com](http://twloha.com).

**LINDSAY:** We hope each episode is a reminder that your story is important, you matter, and you're not alone. We understand that so many of you listening might be struggling with or know someone who is struggling with the issues we've been talking about. We believe that help exists. Part of our mission is to connect people to the help that they need and deserve. You can find local mental health resources at our websites: [twloha.com](http://twloha.com) and click the FIND HELP at the top of the page. Or, if you need to talk to someone right now, you can always connect with our friends at Crisis Text Line. You simply text the word TWLOHA—that's T-W-L-OH-A—to 741741 and you'll be connected to a trained crisis counselor. It's free, confidential, and available 24/7.

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**LINDSAY:** A big thank you to our friends at Copeland for the original music on this episode. This episode was produced by Mark Codgen, with editorial support by Claire Biggs of Lore de Force and Becky Ebert. And music assistance provided by James Likeness and Ben Tichenor. I'm Lindsay Kolsch. Thank you so much for listening.

To Write Love on Her Arms is a nonprofit movement dedicated to presenting hope and finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide. TWLOHA exists to encourage, inform, inspire, and also to invest directly into treatment and recovery. You can find more information about TWLOHA at [twloha.com](http://twloha.com).