

**Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks
and Melisa Pearce**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Allison Watts, DDS

[Practicing with the Masters](#) with Allison Watts, DDS

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Welcome to *Practicing with the Masters* for dentists with your host, Dr. Allison Watts. Allison believes that there are four pillars for a successful, fulfilling dental practice: clear leadership, sound business principles, well-developed communication skills, and clinical excellence. Allison enjoys helping dentists and teams excel in all of these areas. Each episode she brings you an inspiring conversation with another leading expert. If you desire to learn and grow and in the process take your practice to the next level, then this is the show for you. Now, here's your host, Dr. Allison Watts.

Allison: Welcome to *Practicing with the Masters* podcast. I'm your host, Allison Watts, and I'm dedicated to bringing you masters in the field of dentistry, leadership, and practice management to help you have a more fulfilling and successful practice and life.

Melisa and Bethany, it is wonderful to have you guys here. I've known Bethany for ... I don't know how many years, Bethany?

Bethany: Quite a while.

Allison: Yeah, Bethany and I are friends. Melisa is her mentor and Melisa and Bethany are co-facilitating a workshop for dentists, a three and a half day retreat here in about six weeks. They were kind of enough to come and share with us what they're doing because I think it's really new and upcoming in dentistry. I don't know if Melisa can tell us in a little bit if she's ever worked with dentists before but we're excited that we're included in your group of people that get to learn from horses.

Melisa: Thank you, Allison, you bet.

Allison: Yeah. So, I'll go ahead and talk about Bethany a little bit here. Bethany is a certified ECG methods coach, which is Equine Gestalt Coaching, right? That's what it stands for?

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Bethany: Correct.

Allison: One of the most difficult and courageous decisions Dr. Bethany made was after a very successful career in dentistry, she left during the peak years. It didn't happen overnight but she was basically being a visionary who followed her heart and it became clear to her that she had to do what it took to be free and follow her passion of helping others. She also wanted to be outside with her horses. So defining core values, writing a clear vision, and living congruently in order to manifest that vision became her highest priority.

After twenty years as a dentist, she sold her practice, became a life coach in 2011, and a Certified Equine Gestalt Coach in 2015. She is now deeply committed through facilitating impactful retreats in partnership with horses to inspire dentists to achieve balance, peace, and prosperity within the chaos of working in a dental practice. She is now restoring hearts and spirits instead of teeth.

Then we have Melisa Pearce here who is the founder of the Equine Gestalt Coaching Method and she is the founder and owner of Touched by a Horse. She is a therapist, writer, coach, speaker, entrepreneur, mentor, and horsewoman. She is the founder of the Equine Gestalt Coaching Method, which is a method that she shares through her certification program. Her passion is teaching others how to facilitate the work involving the emotional healing and exploration of self through interaction with horses.

So I'm going to ask Bethany to start for us. Bethany, tell us a little, I think most of the people on here are in dentistry somehow. Tell us a little bit about how you ended up going from dentistry to doing the equine coaching.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Bethany: Sure. Well, first I'll just mention what an honor it is to be a guest on this teleconference. I really appreciate being invited and combine that with having Melisa here, I'm just honored. Thank you all. Melisa is to the horse world, by the way, what Gordon Christensen is to the dental world, just so you all know. I know you all know who Gordon Christensen is.

Allison: Yeah. They are all oohing and aahing but we have them muted so we can't hear them.

Bethany: Yeah, they're all nodding.

Allison: I'll tell you, Melisa, that's a big deal. That's a big deal.

Melisa: Yeah, I don't know who Gordon is but ... yay. [Laughs]

Bethany: So to make a long story short, I'll tell you a little bit about my journey. I practiced clinical dentistry for twenty years in northern Michigan and it was a very successful practice, especially from the outside looking in. I created it from the ground up and I had a wonderful team. My patients seemed to like me. I had a good income and I worked four days a week. What more could I ask for, right? In a profession?

But during that time of practicing, I became really bogged down with the extreme demands of our profession. I know you all know what I'm talking about. I personally became very unhappy being a dentist. Combine that with the fact that my heart really longed to follow my other passions and make a positive difference in another way. I struggled for years with what to do. It was not a short-term thing. I had many emotions around leaving my profession: feelings of failure, embarrassment, and shame.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

I woke up in the middle of the night with fear and anxiety of the unknown and, “What if I leave?” And then, “What if I don’t?” Knowing that I had to go into work in the morning would literally ... sometimes I cried and felt really sick and that was my story for quite a while. I had a lot of debt to deal with, obligated to the team. So you know, being a dentist and running a practice for me, it was a school of hard knocks because I started out real, as we all do, a little naïve, but real bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

But now that’s the main reason why I’m deeply committed to helping others, other dentists, to better handle the stresses of the profession. Because I have been there. So I finally made the decision that my health and wellbeing and sanity meant more to me than living up to other people’s expectations of me and my team and my patients.

So I sold the practice to follow my other passions, which were being outside, in nature. Being inside just sucked me dry every day. Being with my horses. The biggest passion was coaching others toward their best life. Because during my time as a dentist, I had a coach that helped me out of many a deep hole. That coach was, by the way, it was Dr. Bob Frazer, and I think he’s on the call tonight, I’m not sure. But I’m forever in debt for literally saving me many times. So I intend to pass that gift forward.

I’m not saying everyone needs to leave dentistry. I’m not, definitely, trying to get people to leave. I love dentists and I love that you're doing dentistry, I just don’t want to do it myself. But I would like to make it easier for you. So after selling the practice, I became a Certified Life Coach and recently, like Allison said, I’m a Certified Equine Gestalt coach, which we’re going to talk more about in a few minutes through Melisa’s program,

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Touched by a Horse. So Braveheart Equine Coaching is born and that's the real short story.

Allison: Well, so, that's what I'm curious about. So the Braveheart Coaching, tell me about that and how do you work with dentists? What are you doing? What is the, I guess, mission? Or what do you intend to do with Braveheart?

Bethany: It's my life's calling and purpose really to help dentists respond to the stresses and anxieties of dentistry and life. From a place of clarity, wisdom, and wholeness instead of reacting from a place of fear, scarcity, and brokenness. I'm going to say that again because that's really important. To help dentists respond to the stresses of dentistry from a place of clarity, wisdom, and wholeness instead of reacting from fear, scarcity, or brokenness.

Because no matter how busy you are as a dentist, it's extremely demanding. There's always going to be stresses, anxious patients, insurances, team issues, you know, on and on. So I want to talk for a second about the words "respond" versus "react." There's a big difference between those two words and that's a big piece of what Braveheart is about. So I know everybody is muted. Allison, how would you describe the difference between responding and reacting?

Allison: The first thing that comes to mind is that responding means I have an actual choice, like I'm consciously choosing something. Instead of, reactive sounds like it would be like an unconscious, something that I'm not really choosing. I'm not really thinking about it before I'm doing it. It's running me instead of me choosing it.

Bethany: Yeah, almost like a hijacking.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Allison: Yeah.

Bethany: Yeah, exactly. So let me tell you a quick story to illustrate this. It was well into my career, I had a hard day at the office, which wasn't unusual. It was one of those days where things were just kind of ... we were always a little late and things were just not going well and we were all a little tense. So at the end of the day, I'm so glad it's the end of the day, I'm walking down the hall and my assistant walked into the lab and slammed the door as I went by, like right as I went by.

I was like, boom, immediately offended, angry, and just ready to defend myself. Like I thought she was accusing me of doing something horrible and I'm like, "I worked hard all day to be nice to you and you're going to slam the door in my face?" So I open the door and I walked in ready to just have it out and I asked her not so nicely what her problem was. Not a really smart thing to do. And, why'd she slam the door at me?

She looked up, completely surprised and said in an apologetic voice that the window was open and the breeze took the door out of her hand and shut it. So that is a reaction. Anybody ever done that before? Yeah, before I even knew what I was doing, I was in there confronting her. A real unproductive way to go through life.

So a response in contrast is, like Allison said, having choice, a place of being centered, and may have involved simply asking her if something was up. So a reaction is when a person views the world through their own filters and experiences and expects that they're right and they react with what worked in the past. So I hope this is making some sense.

The reactions are due to what we call in the Gestalt world, unfinished business from the past. So for me, the unfinished

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

business was how I reacted when the door was slammed. To me, it meant, and I figured this out through Melisa's program, I didn't know this at the time. I just thought I had a quick anger button, you know? But to me, a slamming door meant stuff is going to go down, get ready to defend yourself. Or run.

In this situation, I was going to defend myself, which was not reality in the present moment. So it caused a lot of trouble for me as a leader. I disrespected my team member and she was mad at me and I came at her with both guns, so.

So let me wrap this back around to Equine Gestalt Coaching method. This is a method of coaching where the coach and the horse are both active participants in the process of healing unfinished business in the past so that the client can move forward by responding instead of reacting, which lends itself to a much more peaceful life.

If you meet anger with anger, or anger with fear, especially as the leader, it's going to explode. You're going to have bombs all over all day long. So you're going to have a happier team, better relationships with the patient. I mean, it all leads to more success all around. Does that make sense? Are there any questions for me?

Allison: We do you a question. You are unmuted.

Angela: Thank you for unmuting me. This is an unusual state for me to be in. Bethany, I appreciate your stories and tying it into your personal experiences. I have a question in that I'm curious about when you're telling the story about your assistant slamming, seemingly slamming, the door in your face. You talked about how you felt angry and you had those sorts of feelings that you could express. What were some of the

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

feelings that you couldn't express? What was happening within your body?

The reason I ask that is that when I think of horses, I think of the calm and peaceful stillness that a horse, unless there's danger or some other harm going on, I've always known to be very calm and very peaceful. So I'm interested in how these two tie together with what your body was also experiencing while you were going through these times.

Bethany: Brilliant, Angela. Well in the moment, my body was feeling, just adrenaline. It was a fight or flight response. I mostly feel it in my gut. And, what I couldn't express? Well I was hijacked. I didn't have the knowledge to know that I had a choice in the moment, that's for sure. What I couldn't express was just take a moment, take a breath, and take stock of the situation before just going in and reacting. But I didn't have the experience. I didn't know what that unfinished business was. This wasn't even vocabulary to me, I was just reacting.

Melisa: So Bethany, if I might interject, this is Melisa, and thank you first of all, everyone, for being on the call tonight. I love Allison's question because so much of the work that we do and that people will be experiencing when they're with us is called flowmatic work, which is the body work. The mindfulness around horses and the energy fields that we have in our bodies is what they're responding to and they make actual physical changes in ours during the work. So it's a fascinating process.

So I thought your question was very good because definitely the adrenaline kicked in, most likely for you, Bethany. Tenseness, and all of these things that come from an autonomic state, they don't come from a choice, again, I loved the way that that was expressed earlier. So we just go into this

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

responsive, reactive, struggle between the two. Trying to stay on our feet, if you will. By finishing the unfinished business of the past, then that shifts and it changes permanently, it changes forever. So, thanks for letting me interject that.

Bethany: Absolutely. Yeah, so that's why I can even tell this story right now. Looking back at my career as a dentist, I was reacting all over the place. I don't even know why people stayed and worked for me. Tracy, you can touch on that maybe, I don't know. I had good intentions, but I was just reacting. When the leader is reacting, like I said, it spreads like wildfire. That made it really hard for me.

Now if I would have had the work I've done now when I was a dentist, personally, I still would have left dentistry because my passion is, my heart beats to help others and to make a difference in that way. But if I would have had this program while I was a dentist, I think it would have been a lot easier. I know it would have been a lot easier to stay and do the work.

Allison: Angela, I'm sorry, I was going to let Angela ... I was going to mute you if you were complete with your question even though your line is very quiet.

Angela: I put mine on mute so I wouldn't interrupt but no, thank you.

Allison: Okay, I'm going to mute you back and if you have another question, just raise your hand for us. Okay, great, thank you for your question, Angela. Sorry, I just wanted to make sure that if she was not muted that she got muted. Were you about to say something, Melisa?

Melisa: Yeah. So ironically, I have to say, Bethany invited me on this call and I have my six-month dental check up in the morning and I'm just going to walk in and give him a big ole hug. I love

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

my dentist [laughs]. Because of my meeting Bethany, and she spent two years in my program. My program is a high-intensive experience of two years of training and we cover a lot of different things in the world of Gestalt and horses and all of that. Through getting to know her, and I adore her like you do, Allison, just getting to know and looking at that profession from a different level, as a psychotherapist.

I certainly know a lot of other psychotherapists that are dedicated to their field, dedicated to their profession, and they too could say, "Wow, the stresses of running the business side get to me." Or, "The atmosphere gets to me." Or certainly, "The employees get to me" or whatever. It's not totally an anomaly just for dentists. Certainly medical doctors I work with or lawyers that I work, all kind of commiserate in the idealistic self that goes into a profession to begin with, the amount of investment educationally, financially, emotionally, in every way to become successful in that field.

Then the disillusionment sets in of, "Wow, this is not what I actually dreamt my life would be." It happens for people. So that's certainly part of I guess what we do as adults when we settle into our careers. But I've gotten an additional sensitivity meeting Bethany and really hearing ... because that was not a profession I necessarily would have had on my radar screen for some of the things that come in that add to some of that imbalance or disillusionment or just kind of loss of self I guess in the middle of a busy career, which is certainly what it is. So after I give him a hug, I'm going to see if he wants one of our seats at the retreat that's coming up too. We'll find out.

Bethany: Yeah, ask him, absolutely.

Melisa: I will.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Bethany: We're more than halfway full but we have spots left in the retreat. So it would be really great if anybody else would find this information helpful or this work helpful, to check it out.

Melisa: Well maybe we should describe just a little bit, Bethany, what they would be experiencing. Do you think that would be helpful to the listeners, Allison? Like what it would be like?

Allison: I do. I was going to ask you, I want to know a little bit more about the Gestalt. I mean I've heard of Gestalt and I'm just curious what ... I'd love to know more about it. The method that you've developed and how it can help us.

Melisa: Well, I'm a lifetime horseman, so I've had horses all my life. I've worked with several different breeds of horses. In the early years of my psychotherapy practice, I was trained as a Gestalt, and that's a German word for wholeness. It was pretty fringy, on the edge, type of therapy in the 70s and the 80s. But today, like a lot of other things, it's kind of grown up and matured.

So Gestalt simply means people are getting an opportunity to be really fully present in the present moment with themselves, in contact with their environment, and in contact with other beings. In this case, a horse. So it's a real breakaway experience for someone.

You know, you could go, and I'm sure every dentist listening has done the Radisson Hotels, candy dish, and water glass, you know, the chicken lunch, that kind of training for their CEUs or whatever they're doing. I think we've all kind of suffered through those with the PowerPoint presentation at the front. And a lot of times I'll come away inspired from something like that. But honestly, thirty days later, life goes on and those things sort of drift away.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

What I know that we've developed here is that people who come here, there's not a candy dish in sight, no white tablecloths. They're really coming to a beautiful Colorado working ranch. They're interacting with animals that are 1,200 pounds to 1,800 pounds that are teachers and healers. You never, ever forget what a horse teaches you about yourself.

So I'll meet people twenty years after I've worked with them in a leadership conference or a career conference or whatever it might be with my horses, and they still remember details of what they learned from that horse. Just in that experience, they're taking it in. You know, fully, as someone said earlier, through their body, through the total experience of what the horses have to show them about who they are. How they show up. So they'll come here. We have a big, beautiful indoor arena. The weather that time of year, in October, is usually stunning in Colorado. If it's not, we've got a big indoor arena, so we've got all that set up.

The horses that I work with are three different breeds right now that we've got on site. One is a kind of rare breed called a Gypsy Vanner. If you remember the round-topped wagons that you might have seen, a drawing of a gypsy going across the country and they have a black and white horse pulling this harness on this round top wagon. That's where this breed kind of comes from. They were bred by the gypsies for pulling their vans, hence the name. Most of them are imported from the U.K. or Ireland so the ones that we have are incredible somatic healers for people and they do a lot of things to prove to people sort of what's going on in their body that they're not aware of. They have a great ways of giving direct feedback to that. Then we have Painted Quarter Horses too so they mix in as well with everyone.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Some of the things that people will be doing a lot of is very hands on and what I know is that a lot of people have not had experience with horses. Sounds like one of your listeners actually has and has a good line on who they are and what they're all about. But an awful lot of people have not. They sometimes have fear around them. They certainly have a lot to learn around them.

So it's challenging, like a live ropes course I suppose, or an obstacle course. Kind of a live being that they're going to be in relationship with for that weekend. So that relationship teaches the client a great deal about, what style of leader are you? What kind of listener are you? How do you face things that are difficult or challenging? Are you a perseverance person? Or are you a "ask questions" person?

So we put people through all different types of experiences with the horses. So they learn a tremendous amount about themselves. Most of my clients and Bethany's clients say things like, "I feel like I've come back to myself after this weekend." It's not as much that it shifts you to something new as it kind of returns you to where you really wanted to be and who you originally were before you set out on whatever journey of education, and investment, and work, and mortgages. You know, all the things that we deal with in adult life.

Bethany: It's like hitting the reset button almost.

Melisa: It is like hitting ... yeah, a lovely reset button. So you wear your play clothes. Remember when you had to change after school to your play clothes before you could go out to play? You wear your play clothes. And we have great food involved. I think just being on the ranch is such a getaway experience that most people don't have in their everyday life. It's quiet and they might

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

hear a coyote or see a bear walk through the creek. But they're not going to see a lot of traffic or hear a lot of everyday noises. We don't allow any drills on site. There's no [makes a drill sound]. None of that dental noise [laughs].

Allison: [Laughs] I don't think anybody would want to bring those with them. I hope not. That would be really scary. They need a different kind of workshop.

Melisa: That's right, that's right. See, I'm looking forward to it because dentists are not a population that I have a tremendous amount of experience with. I certainly have done some marital counseling with dentists and wives just by coincidence, but not as a demographic target population.

So when you opened the call and said that this is something kind of new and different for the dental world, it is. Because one of the things I ask every one of my graduates to do is to really think in their heart and soul, "What's the population that you feel you could be in the greatest service to? Where would your heart really sing if you could help a certain population of the world?"

Well I have graduates that are helping inner city teenagers, veterans home from war, I mean, all different types, mother-daughter relationships, marital stuff, there's a lot of things out there in the world to be drawn to. After her soul searching, Bethany knew for a fact that for her because of this wonderful mentor she has, Bob, that for her she really has a calling to give back to dentists so that they can move in a happier, more joyful way through their practice. So really looking forward to meeting them.

Allison: And their lives, right?

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Melisa: Yeah. What good is it? Neither one is good without the other, right? It's doesn't work to have all the money come in the door and no time to go enjoy it. Or, "Gosh, I have my practice really great but my family life is a wreck." Or, "My family life is great but the practice is suffering." So those are everyday issues that people deal with and more, I think as a dentist.

Allison: I love what you said about being present too because I think, at least for me, and part of my personality is someone who's always like goal driven and going to the next, "We're going to do this in our practice. We're going to do this."

And I miss a lot, or have missed a lot, because I wasn't present in the moment of the experiences. Or really paying attention to what I should—I shouldn't say should be doing—but what's really calling me forth instead of there's something ... You know, it's an awareness of something different than what's pushing me. Kind of back to respond/react thing. Like there's something calling that I might have

Melisa: Yeah, and that's where horses live.

Allison: Say it again?

Melisa: That's where horses live. So that's why it becomes an incredible tool to be able to just be in the same presence with them because horses live right in this moment now. Their brains work very differently than ours. When I lecture in the U.S. on the equine circuit, I'm always helping horse enthusiasts understand something very important. And that is that the horse lives most of its day, unless a human is putting them through something they're not liking, they live most of their day in serenity. They're very peaceful, they're in serenity. They're kind of coasting through.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

What they're not doing ... my horses right now, I can see my barn and they're all relaxing out there in their little runs and what they're not doing is having a conversation that says, "Gosh, I hope I can afford that next month. What do you think? Geez. I think I blew it yesterday. Do you think she's still mad at me? Gosh, what do you think we ought to do about next week's meeting with this or that?" They don't do any of that.

They're running incredible, serene tapes through their brain. They're right in the present. Their bellies are full. They just finished dinner. It's a beautiful 70-degree evening. They're standing out in their runs. You know, it's gorgeous right now. They're not worried about yesterday. They're not worried about an hour ago. And they're certainly not worried about an hour from now.

The difference with the human brain of course is we spend a tremendous amount of time in neurosis. It's what we do best. We vibrate at a level that says, "I always need to be figuring out how I'm going to improve something. How I'm going to change something. How I'm going to get better on something. How I'm going to make something happen." We spend so little time where life really exists, which is right in the present moment.

So one thing they teach us is you cannot travel to another moment when you have a 1,200 pound friend with you. They're there, they demand you are present to the experience. So that's one of the things they give us as a tremendous gift. And they also ...

Allison: You're not having people riding, right? There's no riding?

Melisa: No, there's no riding on this experience at all. We hope we get you excited enough that you want to ride [laughs]. Go and find a horse and ride it. But no, this is much more giving the horse a

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

voice to give you feedback on how you're doing. How you're doing as a person. How you're doing physically. How you're doing as a leader. They have a lot of creative ways to express that and to let people know that.

So this is a very different experience of horses. Most people have the experience of going out and bossing a horse around. I'm going to put a halter on you. I'm going to put you here. I'm going to brush you. I'm going to saddle you. I'm going to ride you. I'm going to put you away and I might be a nice owner that pats you on the back and says thank you. Maybe. Maybe, I'll be nice.

But that's not this experience. This is where we're surrendered to them. You're usually on what's called "free liberty" with them and they're giving you feedback on you. So it's very outside the box and it's a lot of fun for people.

Bethany: It's been scientifically shown too that the presence of a horse calms down a person. The heartrate goes down. Blood pressure goes down. Just standing next to a horse. If anybody has horse experience, you know that when you're in a bad mood or you're sad or you need a shoulder to cry on, you can go to the barn and in ten minutes, it's transformed. It's the magic of a horse.

Allison: So I'm curious about the Gestalt thing. So the equine obviously is the horse and the Gestalt is wholeness. So the horse is helping us become more whole by ... or I guess not become but ... maybe see our own? It's reflecting back to us our own wholeness?

Melisa: In a lot of ways, it is. Some of it is the actual coaching method that Bethany and I do, and so there's several different ways. It's such an experience to describe. It's like trying to describe

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

something in a ropes course or any other kind of experiential effort. You sort of need to see it rather than talk about it.

But the Gestalt part comes in with the coaching because the horses are living this very full presence, whole life. So you're right, they're modeling that part for us. Things come up for people and what we're working on is what's called the foreground.

So if I'm working with one of the participants in the retreat and something kind of is up for them. So they say, "Well here's what I'm aware that I'm struggling with in my life, in my practice, in my bank account." Whatever it is. Well here is what I would say is the most up for me and that I'm aware of that's distracting me in my life.

Then what we're really good at is without them saying a whole lot, finding the background, which is the Gestalt. Finding the background. Finding the Rorschach test, you know? Finding what's behind that and working on that to bring completion there that allows them to once and for all put that issue at bay.

Allison: Okay. So that's the thing that Bethany was talking about ...

Melisa: Right.

Allison: ... with the unfinished business.

Bethany: The slamming of the door is the foreground.

Melisa: I'll give you just a really quick corporate example. I had a client recently and she came in and she had been referred to me. She said, "I have this great job in this large corporation here in Denver and I'm considering quitting my job and I don't want to. I have good benefits, I have all of these things. I like most of the

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

people I work with.” But she said, “I go to these meetings and in the meetings there’s this one man and when he’s expressing himself he stands up, he paces around the room, he’s pretty loud. Then sometimes he’ll make his fists to make a point, kind of pounds on the conference table.”

She said, “But what happens to me is I get literally physically ill. I get nauseous. I feel like I have to run to the bathroom. My heart is racing.” And she said, “Unfortunately, he’s on my work team. I’ve gone to HR. It’s just his style of expression and he’s never done anything to me. But I get anxiety now driving to work when I know we have a meeting.” So she was having enough physical problems, emotional problems, there was enough to make her think about walking away from her job. She felt, to be honest, she said, “I feel kind of crazy. Like why is this bothering me so much?”

So a typical sort of talk therapy or HR thing would be to start brainstorming all the practical ways. Like, “Have you tried telling him this? Have you tried asking him not to? Have you tried this? Have you tried that?” That is not what we do. So instead what I did was I asked her to close her eyes. She did. I said I’m going to repeat back to you some of the things that you said and I want you to close your eyes and sort of drift back through your life until you find a place where this is familiar. So I said, “I’m raising my voice. I’m making my point. I am full of passion. In fact, I might slam my hand on the table to make sure my points are heard and people notice that I really care about this.”

Well anyway, I go through that with her. Her eyes fly open and she said, “Oh my god. I never put that together.” She said, “When I was a little girl, my dad and my brother did not get along. My brother was ten years older than me and he and my dad would get into these arguments at dinner. Like a lot of

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

times at dinner. And the next thing I know, my dad is slamming his fist and then he and my brother would physically get into it.” And she said, “I was raised in this kind of upper-middle class family. It was so out of character but it terrified me as a little girl and I remember I’d go in the bathroom and I’d throw up and I’d feel sick. My mom would come in and say, ‘It’s okay. There just men and they’re just arguing.’” And she kind of excused it away.

But all these years later, thirty-five years later, she is responding, she’s in a reaction to this man. Who had never done anything to her. He is just a big bully in the boardroom. He never did anything. But her reaction, she could not figure out for the life of her. To put those two things together. So she had gone through a series of times when boyfriends had raised their voice and she’d say, “Oh my god. Don’t get mad.” She just couldn’t handle male expression.

So at that point, it really shifted her. She was able to go back to work and she was able to say, “You know, Bill, I want to hear what you have to say and I kind of shut down and I can’t hear it. So if you can ...” But it didn’t bother her anymore. She just saw him for what he was, a guy that was kind of loud and expressed himself in a really loud way. He wasn’t going to punch anybody, that was all projected onto him. So that’s just a really minimal example, but that’s the type of thing.

Bethany: A horse was involved.

Melisa: Yes, a horse was involved in that. What the horses bring up at that point is often where the person is holding onto that in their body. Or they are bringing into them, the horse might actually come in really close and kind of push that boundary. Or kind of backing the person up where they’re like, “What am I supposed to? This horse is coming toward me. I’m backing up, I’m

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

backing up.” Instead of setting their boundary and finding it in their body core how to just say, “We’re good, right here.”

Horses are quick feedback of whether you're a leader, whether you have your balance or not. The kind of person you are, it just shows up immediately. So maybe that helps. I hope that helps gives an example.

Allison: Yeah. So you're getting feedback and it helps you to make shifts in that moment.

Melisa: Absolutely.

Allison: So you can see like then, okay, the next feedback is, okay I'm doing better. Like you're getting feedback right then.

Melisa: Right.

Allison: And you're actually doing the work in the moment.

Bethany: And because you're so present in the work and the experiment, there's something about it that people can see things about themselves clearly that in the office they can't see.

Melisa: Right.

Bethany: When the horses are interacting with the team or the dentist, showing them what kind of leader they are, it is how you are as a leader. The horse is showing them certain things and they have this aha moment that they can take back to the office immediately. It will change for the positive. So it's a great experience.

Melisa: We had a large architectural firm, forty-five architects out from a company called Boulder Architectural ... They came out and another just really quick example. There was a young woman in

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

her late 20s who had gotten promoted from within by the bosses, over some people who had considerable more seniority than she did. She had a lot of faith ... the boss teams, they had a lot of faith in her and I could certainly see why but I also picked up really quickly on how frightened she was because she was not being effectual with the team.

So she was put in a round pen with a black and white Paint Horse that I have that's kind of a boundary pusher. She's in a sixty-foot circle, called a round pen. So she's loose with this horse. The horse doesn't have anything on them and she's asked to begin to move this horse in a certain direction. She didn't know anything about horses. So of course, you had to experiment with it and we helped her and coached her.

By the end, making a very long story short. In the beginning, she was doing a lot of begging. She was doing, "Okay, go this way, come on." Like you might with a dog or a little child. So finally, this 1500 pound horse is looking at her going, "I'm not feeling it." He's kind of doing what he wants to do and going any direction he wanted at whatever speed he wanted. By the end of the time with that, she was able to step in the pen, make a fair request, not needing to go into dominance or control or being mean or a bully or raising her voice or getting any larger.

But because we helped her understand how to be fully present in her body and make effectual statements to the horse, she could make him go any direction she wanted without touching him, without threatening him, at any speed she wanted, turn in any direction she wanted. She had full request and response from this horse.

How it translated back to the boardroom is she was no longer the young girl feeling guilty about her promotion and who used

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

to say, “So, I was thinking what we might work on is ... and I’d love to have any of you that would like to be on this committee.” She was coming across just kind of all wishy-washy, nilly-willy. The next after that retreat, she went in and she was able to say, “Bill, Joe, Joann, I want you guys to work on this. Bring the numbers to the next meeting of this and this and this. Well Sam and Carly, you two are going to be focusing on this. But by next week, we’ll have this project this far along. Any questions? Are we all clear? Let’s go to work.” She was commanding it and owning it. So it made a huge difference.

In a dental office, I don’t know how that’s going to translate. The horses are going to help us figure that out but there’s ways of moving through life with dominance and force and control and strife and difficulty. Or there’s ways that are much more true to a healer’s personality. And dentists are healers. Originally, you guys went into it, I’m guessing, because you wanted to make a difference in people’s lives. You wanted to care about their health. You wanted to make sure people took better care of themselves and made the connection between their teeth and the rest of their health. Then also make a good living and be successful and do things you like to do with your life. And it’s that last part that doesn’t ...

Bethany: And dentistry, I don’t think is ... you know, the stresses of the insurance companies and dentistry being a profession where the owner of the business is also the main producer and the one responsible for personnel issues, team leadership, the bills, payroll, on and on and on it goes. So what has to change is how we react to it, or respond instead of reacting. So that’s the big shift.

Melisa: Bethany, I’m just curious how much in dental school, if any, do they give you entrepreneurial training? Like training of how to

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

be a successful entrepreneur and be in business for yourself. Do they give you some of that?

Bethany: No. Maybe one class. Like for a week for one semester.

Allison: I wouldn't even call it entrepreneurship really. It's not a creative, necessarily, process. Now, Bill Wathen is on here and he's been working at Baylor. But I mean they had like, when I was there, one business course that was like a practice management thing and it was pretty quick. But I don't remember much about leadership and communication. There was a little bit.

Bethany: There may be more now but it's a school of hard knocks for sure. People do well for a while but something has got to give and unfortunately, dentists still have the highest suicide rate and depression and anxiety. It's a tough world to be in.

Melisa: When people apply for a job, the job already exists and it's very laid out for them. I would guess that similar private practices that I coach entrepreneurship with, you guys are starting a business that was not there until you created it. You're already working on it long before it's in existence.

Bethany: Well, a lot of dentists buy a practice. A lot of times they buy, I think that's what mostly happens now. I was a little bit unusual starting from zero. I had two charts in a drawer and my mom was one of them [laughs].

Allison: And the other one was your own?

Bethany: Probably. I don't know, my boyfriend or something. Who knows?

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Melisa: Well I want to get tips from all the dentists on how to talk my dentist into not retiring. I think he's getting to retirement age and I've been with him a long time and I don't want him to retire. So that's the patient side of it, when you really love your dentist and feel safe in their hands and then their advice. That's the other side of that. Boy, from a client perspective, you get a good dentist, you want to keep them.

Bethany: Well, I know Melisa, you've been an anxious patient through the years, haven't you? You've been pretty anxious?

Melisa: I don't think I would call it anxious but I discovered at a young age how much nicer dentistry is with the gas, you know?

Bethany: Nitrous gas? [Laughs]

Melisa: I don't know if I'm really anxious because I know the nitrous is there. I don't use it for cleaning but if I have to have something done, you know, I'm happy to have nice, natural teeth. But if I have to have something done, I'm the first one to go, "Hey, so let's have some nitrous here." And I just relax.

Bethany: The latest thing in anti-anxiety for patient treatment is NuCalm. Actually NuCalm has committed to sponsoring my retreat, which means that there will be four NuCalm units there to try out. And NuCalm is, well Matt Steinberg talked about it last week, he talked a lot about how it works in the mid-brain to induce the relaxation response for the patient and the clinicians can do better, work faster, less salivary glands working.

Quick story about NuCalm. I have a unit myself, I purchased one at AADPA in March and I've been using it at home. But I had a filling done a couple of weeks ago and I thought, "Wow, what an awesome chance to try NuCalm as a patient." At home on the couch, it is very relaxing and nice.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

But using it in a dental chair as a patient was like night and day. It is awesome and I just want to plug NuCalm. It was the most amazing experience. When I was done, I actually felt refreshed and I was not tired. My neck didn't hurt from tension, my masseter muscles were calm, and I didn't have any issues like that. So there's going to be four units at the retreat that the participants can try. They're going to be in one of Melisa's yurts. She has a yurt. How do you describe a yurt, Melisa?

Melisa: I have three twenty-foot yurts. So they're nomadic housing. They're like permanent tents in a sense. They're carpeted. They're up on decks and all that kind of thing. They're just really lovely.

Bethany: Kind of a really fancy tent.

Melisa: Yeah, exactly, a really fancy permanent tent. So that will be fun. We'll have them in there and everybody will get a chance to try the NuCalm out. I plan on trying it too, right? I get to try it too?

Bethany: Oh, absolutely.

Melisa: I can kick my nitrous habit. Now, it's bad when a patient is going to the dentist, "I hope I have a cavity because I could use some nitrous today."

Bethany: That's not good.

Allison: Maybe your dentist could start using it and it would give him just a rejuvenation of feeling younger, and more enthused, and more alive and alert, and wanting to practice dentistry for another twenty years.

Melisa: Yeah. Now you're talking. Now you're talking. He'll probably sell his practice. He's a lovely guy but he's been at it a long time

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

and keeps his practice very small. I've seen dental offices and have been a customer of dental offices that are quite large with several dentists in them and a lot of hygienists and all. So I know there's a wide variety of how people set up their practices and how that all works and how it goes.

So that's something for people to kind of explore too. How did you choose the direction that each of you went in? Did it happen by default? Did it happen by plan? Was it the correct path? Is it bringing you what you want out of the experience?

Bethany: What's the missing piece if it's not bringing you what you want?

Melisa: Well, we promise anyone that joins us for the retreat will have a full experience like you've never had before. You do not need to know anything about horses. In fact, if you're a little bit afraid of horses, this is the retreat for you. So if you say, "I don't know the first thing about them. I don't even know if I like them. They're just fly magnets." I mean, whatever. If you have a negative feeling about horses, you probably really should be here because they'll change your mind. These are incredibly loving, centered, grounded, zen-ful, horses full of mindfulness. These are true healers in the world. So love to introduce them to you. I'm sure they have a lot to say.

Some of them, you can look at their teeth. Horses have very different dental. You pull a horse's tooth and they just grow another one. So how nice is that? Why weren't we created the same way?

Bethany: That's awesome.

Melisa: Yeah. They do, you just pull it and another tooth grows in. So it's kind of handy.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Allison: That's real handy. Maybe we can evolve, somehow direct that evolutionary ... that would be amazing.

Melisa: Bethany, I just had a crazy thought. I do have a crazy, crazy thought for the retreat. But would it be fun for the dentists if I had my equine dentist come out and do the teeth of one of my horses while they're there and they could see it? I mean, it really is ... they use a speculum and they could feel up in the mouth and really kind of see all that. I don't know if that would be fun or weird but if you wanted, I got one, at least the dental stuff, that might be kind of a fun that we could do.

Bethany: Yeah. We can talk about that. It's always intriguing for me when I get my horses' teeth done.

Melisa: Yeah. We'll use NuCalm on the horse and see how it works [laughs].

Allison: They do use it. I know they've used it on dogs before, I've heard that for sure.

Melisa: Well, there you go.

Allison: I don't know if they do it on horses, but, yeah.

Bethany: What are we on time, Allison?

Allison: Yeah, we're close to the end. We've got about five minutes, seven minutes.

Bethany: Okay. I wanted to real quick talk a little bit about the other services. I don't just offer retreats. I offer coaching, individual coaching, on the phone and individual sessions for two hours or two-day sessions with the horses. If you're out of town, we can do two days. I also offer coaching packages. We package together coaching with individual sessions and retreats. So lots

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

of things being offered. The website is BraveheartEquineCoaching.com. If you're interested in the retreat, go to the upcoming events tab and the information is right there.

Allison: As far as coaching, everybody on this call may be on this call because they know what coaching is and they're interested in it. But I have had a few people like, I'm doing some coaching as well, some life coaching, and they don't really understand. Some people think of sports. I know that in dentistry we've been real familiar with consultants. When you think of coaching somebody ... I know Bob has coached you, I've worked with Bob. How does that work? A little bit about coaching in general?

Bethany: I use what's called the co-active model of coaching which means that really the power and the potential and the answers lie within the client. It's my job as the coach to get those answers out of the client by asking powerful questions and leading them into thoughts they wouldn't have had if I wouldn't have asked a question. So that's really, in a nutshell, the coaching I would do, especially on the phone.

Now with the horses, if we did a two-day session, you'd come in. We do all kinds of things, self-discovery. The individual sessions are just one person with me and then a handler and a horse. So it would be us for two days discovering all kinds of things about yourself. Then we would set forward what we're going to work on in coaching based on what we found in the exploratory session. If that makes sense.

Allison: Then you also work a little bit ... you said you could have people bring their teams?

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Bethany: Yeah. If a dentist is coaching with me, part of the coaching package would be doing an individual team retreat with the dentist and their team. So the whole team will come in and we'll do leadership exercises. We'll set up obstacle courses and leading a horse through it. Learning what the leadership style is of the leader and who is really leading the office. If there is a hygienist who is leading and everybody knows it, or the front desk person. That happens a lot if the dentist doesn't step up to lead, somebody's going to lead. That all comes out.

We talk about typology, personality typology deepens the understanding of why people are the way they are and why they act, in teams, this introvert versus extrovert. There's a lot to it but they leave with a deep understanding of each other and a respect that wasn't there before. A new way of communicating and just an openness that wasn't there.

It cultivates deeper relationships with each other which translates to the patient, obviously. It's very transformational and long lasting. It's not one of those Holiday Inn, where you go and sit at the white table cloths. I never wanted to do that. I wanted to get down into the horse part and get to work, you know?

Melisa: That's right, that's right.

Allison: I think there's a lot of little, I don't even know that it's really under the radar, but sort of subliminal, or underneath tensions in offices between people. Like my hygienist and I had a thing where I felt like the way to communicate was just to tell the truth and I would say things that hurt her feelings.

It got to the point where she was going to leave because she felt, she didn't feel understood. But it was there all the time, even though something wasn't happening right in the moment.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

There was always that underlying expectation that I was going to do this or that. I guess, not just the stuff from our childhood comes back to bite us but the stories we have about each other. We already have beliefs and stories in place about how the other person behaves and what they're going to do.

Bethany: That gets transformed. All that stuff. It's amazing.

Allison: That's amazing. That sounds wonderful. I know you wanted to offer one more thing, Bethany. We just have a couple minutes but I know you have your tips for dentists to ... I can't think of the name ... the paper or article or something?

Bethany: Oh, no. I just have on my website, I have a free gift. It's my five top tips and tricks for dentists. The top five, and you just go to the website and you sign up and you'll get the PDF download. Then you'll get a tip once a month that comes from me. So again, the website is BraveheartEquineCoaching.com.

One example of a tip that really helped me. This seems simple and it seems obvious, but stop doing procedures you don't like. My least favorite procedures were extractions and dentures yet somehow I'd still find them on my schedule because it's hard to let a patient walk out of the office with a referral when you have an opening in the schedule a mile wide the next day. But then I'd dread the appointment and I'd end up referring them anyway and wasting time. You know, things like that. So another thing is get rid of those cords that you run over when you try to reposition your chair [laughs].

Allison: Oh, yeah. It's those little things.

Bethany: Bring them underneath the floor, you know? Oh my gosh, there's so many little things that we can do that will help our day go smoother.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Melisa: From the client perspective, stop asking us questions once you have all your stuff in our mouth.

Bethany: Right. Okay. Sorry.

Allison: Oh, that's a good one [laughs]. That's so true. We're so bad about that.

Melisa: I know, it's got to be hard though because you start a conversation and the next thing you know you're into your work and then you're asking a question. It's like [makes sound like mouth is full].

Allison: Yeah, or sometimes it's quiet and you think of things you want to ask but it has to be quiet because the patient's mouth is open.

Melisa: Maybe give them a little whiteboard and a marker or something. I've always thought that would be a good idea. So it means the client can just write the answer down.

Allison: That's a totally good idea, yeah. Awesome. Well I think, unless you guys have something else to add or we have any questions ... We have Tracy just raised her hand. Let me see. I'm going to unmute you, Tracy. There you go.

Tracy: Hello. I'm real excited to not only support Bethany at this retreat but to be at the retreat. I have a question and I'm not sure if it's directed more to either Melisa or Bethany. Is there like a somewhat of an interview at the beginning and then you're assigned a horse that you feel will work best with you? How does that work?

Melisa: It basically works with magic [laughs]. How's that for an answer? So, no, there is somewhat of an interview in that we all

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

get together and do what I call set a container. So the group is really discussing some kind of provocative things to begin with, the first evening. Based on that experience and some other things that we do that night, we really know where the horses should be matched up. So, that's something we do on-site. We kind of have to see you in the moment but there's a lot of magic involved.

Tracy: Great.

Bethany: Intuition, with which horse we work with which client. A lot of intuition.

Tracy: Okay. One of Melisa's stories really resonates with me and I'm really excited to be at the retreat to work through it. So I'm looking forward to it.

Bethany: Awesome.

Melisa: We've got a date.

Bethany: Thanks, Tracy.

Tracy: Yeah. Thank you.

Melisa: Well I think we're just a little bit over halfway filled on that. We try to keep the group between ten to twelve people so they're not real, real large and that way everybody gets a lot of hands on time with the horses and with NuCalm, and the whole experience, everything that we're doing here. So if you have an interest, I would say don't hold back. I'm going directly to my dentist in the morning, so.

Bethany: The retreat starts six weeks from tomorrow.

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

Allison: We have another hand raised. Let me unmute you. Are you good, Tracy? Did that answer your question?

Tracy: Yeah, thank you.

Allison: Okay. You're welcome, I'm going to mute your line. Lori Butler, your line is open.

Lori: Hey, guys. I am a personal friend of Bethany's and Melisa's but my first husband was an orthodontist and know very well the ins and outs and struggles. And what it takes to put a practice together and the love and passion you put through it. I just highly recommend these two ladies, I've been coached by both of them through really transformational issues in my life and I just want to say kudos to you guys and hope to see you there.

Melisa: Thank you. Thanks so much.

Allison: Thank you. All right, Lori, I'm going to mute your line again. Actually, I'm just going to unmute everybody so we can say goodbye. Melisa and Bethany is there anything you want to add before I unmute everybody?

Bethany: No, just thank you.

Melisa: Thank you for having me on tonight. Thank you, Bethany, for involving me in this and I'm really looking forward to it. I have a lot of students and a lot of graduates around the country and I have to say every once in a while as a teacher you get somebody who is just such an avid learner and so much fun to be around, and that's Bethany for me.

So I don't do these with all my students. In fact, the rest of the students are going, "Why are you doing that with Bethany?" And my answer is, "Because I like her." [Laughs]

Ep #43: Living Your Ultimate Life with Bethany Piziks and Melisa Pearce

We're going to have a lot of fun and just kick off this incredible career. I'm interested in meeting Dr. Bob that she's so wild about and just seeing this new horizon. I know she's going to make a big dent in the dental world and I'm glad to be a part of it. Thank you.

Thanks for listening to *Practicing with the Masters* for dentists, with your host, Dr. Allison Watts. For more about how Allison Watts and Transformational Practices can help you create a successful and fulfilling practice and life, visit transformationalpractices.com.