

Episode 72: Meet the SLP Who Walked Across Hot Coals Barefoot! (REAL Talk)

During this week's episode of The Missing Link for SLPs podcast, we speak with speech-language pathologist, life coach, and author Tsgoyna Tanzman. She shares what writing and self-publishing a book was like, why she coaches, and what made her choose speech pathology — and return after some time away.

Discussion & Reflection Questions

1. You recently self-published a book for stroke survivors and caregivers. Can you tell us a little about that?
2. For those who are interested in writing books of their own, what was the writing and self-publishing process like?
3. In addition to being an author and SLP, you're a life coach. How did you get into that, and what is it like?
4. Who are some of the greatest coaches you worked with?
5. Would you share with us why you became a speech pathologist and why you left?
6. What made you come back to the field after spending time away?
7. What words of advice did somebody give you that you did not follow and you were glad you did not follow?

Quotes of the Conversation

"It was how she made me feel. She made me feel like there was hope. She made me feel like there was something that was going to shift. And I left the hospital after that, and I re-entered the field with a whole new perspective of how I was going to work with patients and what my real purpose was."

-Tsgoyna Tanzman

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Speech-Language Pathologist and Life Coach

As a speech-language pathologist and life coach for more than 25 years, Tsgoyna has helped thousands of people transition after stroke and brain injury to the next stages of



their lives. Having worked as a speech-language pathologist in hospitals, home care, residential and skilled nursing facilities, clinics, and community settings. She is an expert at helping people find both their inner and outer resources needed for the process of recovery. Tsgoyna's unique therapeutic approach combines traditional and holistic speech therapy along with the life coaching practices used by some

of the most successful people on the planet. She's trained with legendary coaching gurus Tony Robbins, Dr. Dawson Church, Brooke Castillo, and Mitch Matthews, and she is a Master Practitioner of Neurolinguistic Programming. Tsgoyna is best known for her down-to-earth practicality, enthusiasm, and sense of humor while compassionately guiding survivors and caregivers through recovery. In her spare time, she combs the beach and photographs nature's heart shape signs of love.

Keep the Conversation Going

Thank you for listening to *The Missing Link for SLPs* podcast! **If you enjoyed the show, I'd love you to subscribe, rate it and leave a short review.** Also, please share an episode with a friend. Together we can raise awareness and help more SLPs find and connect those missing links to help them feel confident in their patient care every step of the way.

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*Do you have a question you'd like answered on the show?
Interested in sharing your experience as an SLP with our audience?*

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Not a substitute for a formal SLP education or medical advice for patients/caregivers



The Missing Link for SLPs Podcast Show Notes

Mattie Murrey

Hello, and welcome to this episode of The Missing Link for SLPs podcast. [I'm] glad you are here for part of this series, where we talk to SLPs who have published a book. Whether it's self-publishing or more the traditional route, their passions are written in words. So, welcome to this episode. Enjoy. Also, when you're done, or while you're just listening to the episode, go find us at freshslp.com. Subscribe to us on YouTube. We are definitely working on building a great podcast and would welcome your support.

Mattie Murrey

Welcome to this episode of The Missing Link for SLPs podcast. I am here with somebody who I would like to be like someday. So, welcome to the episode. We are talking today to a very exciting person. And I'm sure if I say your name, I'm going to mess it up because I'm a little nervous myself, which is unusual. So, say your name and introduce yourself, please.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

My name is Tsgoyna Tanzman.

Mattie Murrey

Wonderful to meet you and have you here.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm excited to be here with you, really.

Mattie Murrey

So, you may wonder why I'm nervous, or the listeners may wonder why I'm a little bit nervous. [It's] because you reached out to me, and you said, "I would love to be on your podcast," in a very kind of under-the-wire way. "Here's what I do." And I started looking at what you sent me. And you have a phenomenal book out that I read, and it gave me goosebumps: "Hope After Stroke for Caregivers and Survivors: The Holistic Guide to Getting Your Life Back Edition." [It's] known as "The Stroke Bible." And I looked through it. I read portions of it. When I have time, I will read the entire thing. I'm probably 66% of the way through it. You are a life coach. You have such an interesting story. I'm going to stop talking and let you tell us about your book.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Oh, thanks. I'm excited to share that information. So, I am a speech-language pathologist and have been since 1978. So, I have been in the field for a long time. But quite honestly, I've been in the field and then I've been out of the field. And my background has really almost exclusively been — I would say the vast majority — with stroke patients and people who have suffered traumatic brain injuries. So, that area of study was always really a passion of mine. I worked in



acute hospitals, rehab settings, outpatient centers, community settings, home care — literally every setting around that was possible. And I came to write this book because what I think I really saw most of all, with all of my patients over this vast amount of time — and it didn't matter how old they were, it didn't matter what their ethnicity was — what mattered is that they had all experienced a catastrophic event in their life, whether they were the stroke survivor or the traumatic brain injury survivor. And so did the people in their families. And what I wanted more than anything was to write a book that empowered them. I wanted those people to feel smart and to feel empowered and to feel hopeful in their process of recovery. That was what I thought beyond any of the goals that I ever wrote and any of what was appropriate for Medicare or the insurance companies. That was my bottom-line result. That's what I wanted. And so, I wrote this book.

Mattie Murrey

The passion comes through in the book from the very beginning, where it's, you must read this first, all the way through with each chapter. And you have something tucked at the end of each chapter as a takeaway as well.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, that's what I wanted to do as well. So, I know people are busy. I know the way I read a book... I read a book backwards a lot of times, or a magazine backwards. It drives my husband crazy.

Mattie Murrey

That's why your book is like not all the way done, but I've just skipped and hopped through it. It's just been wonderful.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

And that was exactly the intention. I wanted it to be valuable wherever anybody picked it up. And I call it the "Essential Takeaways" in the book, but in the introduction, I describe it as the "Info to Go" section. I want quick, digestible bytes of information that are easily understood — that somebody can go to a chapter talking about communication problems, and you go back to the end and you get those nuggets, those beautiful takeaway nuggets that somebody can use right away to either have a conversation with their care provider, or to understand their loved one, or for their loved one, the person who's had the event, to understand what's going on for that person himself. So, I felt that each of those essential takeaways was critical. And the way I arranged the book was from "What Happened?" Because really, after all, that's like the first thing that we think: "Oh my God, what just happened?" So, I really helped simplify the medical jargon. And you go to the hospital as a stroke survivor or a caregiver of a stroke survivor, and it is a crash course in medical information. And what we routinely know as the ST, the PT, [or] the OT, somebody who is dealing with all this emotional crisis has no idea what they're talking about. Suddenly, they're able to read MRIs. They have to deal with all these different therapists. So, that first part is "What Happened?" And then the second sort of whole section... And it also describes all the medical stuff, like the feeding disorders and what to look for when you're in



that acute stage of recovery, and how to advocate for your person in the hospital. Because trust me, you need an advocate in the hospital. So ,that second section is "What's Next?" It may be that transition from hospitalization to either going home or into the next phase of long-term recovery in a facility. And then the third part is "What Now?" So, there comes a point in time when the therapists leave. And every stage is both daunting and exhilarating. I can't tell you how many patients say, when they're in the hospital, "I can't wait to get out. I can't wait to get out." And then, [on] discharge day, they're freaked. Right? They're terrified. So, the last section is, "What now? What's going to come now in our life?"

Mattie Murrey

It takes you all the way through the process.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah. And that means going back to work, driving... I have a chapter in there about sex, because you know what, nobody talks about it. It's as if you become asexual once you've had a stroke. Well, that's not true. It's not true at all. And nobody gives anybody guidance about it, whether you're terrified to have sex because you think you might have another stroke, because maybe you actually had a stroke while you were having sex. And that's happened, right? Or those difficult conversations where one partner is either revulsed by or terrified to do something. And then that may go for the person who is the survivor themselves. They have all this self-doubt and self-hatred. So, there's a chapter about that because I want people to... It's not that I know everything. I really researched a lot and spoke to a lot of people. But again, I want whoever's reading the book to have the questions to ask.

Mattie Murrey

Before we started our podcast, we were talking about what series to put you on. And the podcast has a series, "Real Talk." Real conversations. And that's one of the things that I find very appealing about your book. It's like I'm learning from you in a very real and fundamental way — in a very basic way. And I've been in the field for a number of years, and I found it to be very refreshing and real and easy. You just hit on some key truths in there.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

And I want it to be easy to read. Sometimes people, they'll say, "I don't mean to say that it's easy to read." I said, "I am so glad you said it's easy to read." I want it to be. I want it to be that way. And I really wrote it from the point of view that I was sitting down in the room with that person.

Mattie Murrey

That's the impression I got.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah. And I'm really happy that came through. I wanted it to be so intimate, and just conversational. So, I'm really happy that's what you felt.

Mattie Murrey



Almost a one-on-one experience with the book — like the book was talking to me with the experiences that you shared. The way you describe the gentleman laying in the bed who'd had the stroke. I know we have a number of listeners here who are students and clinical medical SLPs, and this is a must-read book for them because it takes wisdom. You've taken wisdom, and you've packed it into this book. So, this is one of those rare books where not only does it teach you something, but it gives you the layers on how to apply it and why it's important.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Well, thank you. And I will say that that was something that I didn't experience at all as a grad student or moving into the field. And in fact, it's kind of funny. It's one of the reasons I left the field for a period of time, as a speech pathologist coming out of grad school in my 20s and starting to work with stroke patients who, at the time, I thought were really old. I don't know. They might have been 40. I say that now as a 66-year-old person that's like, "Oh my God, what was I thinking?" And who knows, they might have been older, but they might have been 40. And it's funny because, as much as I cared — I did care about my patients, I always cared about them — I felt in a lot of ways that I was treated as the friendly visitor and somebody was patting me on the head. And the frequent comment that I would get is, "Oh, you're so pretty." And I would say, "Well, that's swell, but that's not what I'm here for. Thanks, but take me seriously. I know something."

Mattie Murrey

Yes. I do want to ask you some questions about your career. But I know I'm interested in writing a book, and I haven't started it yet. For those of us who are interested in writing a book, tell us about that process.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah. That came to me, literally, in a meditation. So, a little background: Neither of my parents are alive. My father died at the age of 68. I was present at his death. I tried to revive him and failed to revive him. And my mother died at 64, also from a sudden heart attack. I was not there, but as her medical advocate, I was the one that had to tell the medical staff. I had to fulfill her wishes to stop treatment. So, as I approached my 60th birthday, I started to look at it like, "Tick, tick tick. What if? What do I want to do? What is important for me to leave in the world?" And it came to me during a meditation. And I've always written. I have like 16 stories published in various "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books. I've written some blogs, and I was a contributor to an online recovery site, doing blog posts. So I've always written in a way, but I've never written a book. And during this meditation, it came to me to write a book about speech, which I know did not come from my own thoughts. That came from a divine thought because that's not at all what I would have thought I'd write my book about. Not at all. And so, I sort of sat and bargained with this intuition and said, "Okay, if I'm going to write this book, I'm going to be authentic about it. I'm going to tell the truth. I'm going to write it the way I want to write it. And I'm gonna say the words like 'holistic,'" which I was forbidden from saying 30 years ago, when I

started my career — 40 years ago, when I started my career. I was going to write it the way that I wanted to write it.

And I had listened to another podcast. It was about a young guy in his 30s, who had — and I'll shorten the story — created this group called The Self-Publishing School. And his story was really profound and interesting, and about how you can learn if you've never written a book, and how, [in] the world now, every industry has been disrupted and the publishing one way more so. So, as a little background, I had started writing children's books, and I was submitting them in a very traditional way to traditional publishers, where they wanted exclusive submissions. That meant that you could submit one story, and you had to wait six months to a year to hear "no" from them, right? It was a mean industry. And all of a sudden, the self-publishing world came about, where you can write a book and find all the ways to do it. Not a schlock book, but a good book, with editors and with book cover designers and with formatters, etc. And so, I enrolled in that course and followed the process. And I will tell you, writing a book teaches you about who you are. It was a fascinating experience. So I encourage you, if you've got a book brewing in you, to find your voice [and] to find the support. I'm happy to share the resources of The Self-Publishing School. They have a lot of free resources that are YouTube videos, as well as some print stuff. And then, if you decide to go further and invest in their coursework, go ahead and do that. But yeah, The Self-Publishing School was really helpful to me. And I'm actually working on my third. So, I wrote "Hope After Stroke for Caregivers and Survivors," and then I created a companion journal, a workbook journal for caregivers to accompany that book. But the new book that I'm working on is quite a different book. [It's] more about a coaching perspective. But yes, once you get the skills to do that, the sky's the limit. You can self-publish. And self-publishing now is not what it used to be, in terms of, it used to be just this vanity thing like, "Oh, you couldn't get published anywhere else?" And the truth is, if you look at the numbers and the control that you have in doing it yourself, it is totally the way to go.

Mattie Murrey

I know many others would agree with you. They want to get the book done, done well, and out there.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yes. And you have all the control that you want in the way it's marketed. You know, everybody wants the big advance from the publisher, but here's the wicked truth about that: You still have to market your own book. And if you don't sell the 10,000 copies that they have created for you, you have to buy them back.

Mattie Murrey

I didn't know that.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, exactly. Exactly.



Mattie Murrey

So, you're an author and you're also a coach. So, tell us about that, please.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

So, the coaching is really interesting. I came to coaching... As speech pathologists, we're always coaching our patients. You can't take a person who's in the midst of an enormous shift in their life and not be a coach. And so, that was a natural part of it. But I went on to become a certified coach. I mean, I did and always do all the continuing education that we do in terms of counseling and all that type of stuff, but also learning more coaching strategies and coaching techniques. And it occurred to me... One of my taglines was, "You don't have to have a brain injury to damage your brain. You can do it with the thoughts you think and the behaviors that you choose." And that's so true. Because I would think, "Here are these people with brain injuries that are getting better, and other people that I'm dealing with who don't have a brain injury, who don't have memory problems or organizational problems, are thinking thoughts that are creating negative outcomes for themselves when all of those thoughts are optional." We don't believe that they're optional. But we can really sort out the facts, and the stories, and then our thoughts about it. Because our thoughts create our feelings, which direct our actions and ultimately create our results. So, coaching is a wonderful part of what I do, still, as a speech pathologist, but also as a life coach for other people.

Mattie Murrey

You just gave me goosebumps. I admire great coaches. I have worked with great coaches. I know you've worked with great coaches as well. Who are some of the great coaches you've worked with?

Tsgoyna Tanzman

So, total top of the list of mentors: Brooke Castillo, who's got a fabulous podcast called "The Life Coach School." I was trained as a neurolinguistic master practitioner. That was really great work. Derek Rydall is a great, inspirational mentor to me. I worked with Tony Robbins and trained with Tony Robbins. I'm a Fire Walker myself. I actually walked across the hot coals

Mattie Murrey

Oh! How'd you...?

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, that was a fascinating experience. So, I had gone to this experience... And I really came to life coaching there and to Tony's work around 2008, I would say, when the financial world took a huge tumble and we lost 75% of our net worth. Oh well, there was that. And anyway, I decided to participate in one of his trainings. And I went by myself. It was in LA. It was in a huge auditorium. It started at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, and 1 o'clock in the morning was when we first started to go walk on coals. That's when we were doing it, at 1 o'clock in the morning. And leading up until the actual firewalking experience, we did a lot of visualization. And if you would have asked me how long I was lying on the floor of this convention center in preparation and



mental preparation for this exercise, I would have said 15 minutes. But that was at least 45 minutes to an hour of just mental preparation — seeing what we were seeing, hearing what we were hearing, feeling what we were feeling.

And in fact, when I went to do this... Again, I was with a lot of people. There were probably close to 3,000 people in this experience. We walked from the convention center barefoot, actually. We walked barefoot. It wasn't very far from the convention center, where we were going to walk across these hot coals, and it was probably about 15 to 20 feet. I want to say it was 15 feet of walking on these hot clothes. And you're watching the guys with the wheelbarrows of these red hot coals, and they're putting them down. And there was a lot of chatter. I was really happy I was by myself and not influenced by or distracted by other conversations. I focused on what we had done in the visualization exercise, what I was saying to myself, my mental preparation for it, and then it was my turn. And they tell you to walk briskly, but not fast — not like you're running. They don't want you to run across it. And by the time I got to the end of it, somebody grabbed my arm. So, my first inclination was, "Wait, what did I do wrong?" And they stopped me because then they put your feet in water just in case there are embers stuck to your feet because that can happen. So, even though they were already on my feet, and I didn't experience any feeling, once you're out of that sort of mental state, once you've completed it, you could have an ember burn you. So, the reason they stopped me was to just get my feet in the water and wash off anything that was attached. And it was a pretty amazing experience to know that I did that. To know that it was a mindset. To know that it was a possibility for myself.

Mattie Murrey

Very, very strong. Very powerful story.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, it was. It was an incredible thing. And that's how we kicked off three days of intense training.

Mattie Murrey

That's an amazing story.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, it was. It was really cool.

Mattie Murrey

It's an amazing story. I've come through a lot of trials in my time. And one of the things — and I know I shared this with you before — is people have said, "My gosh, you're so strong." And I'm like, "Well, I'm just strong enough." And I love being around people who bring out the goosebumps, and who have that strength. And I love this. I love this, and I'm at a loss for words on what question I want to ask next because that was such a powerful story.

Tsgoyna Tanzman



Likewise, I have to say, Mattie, you amaze me. Truly, you amaze me. You amaze me. Who knows what I would be like in your situation? We just don't ever know. Right?

Mattie Murrey

That's very true. And that's why I do what I do to uplift others, and to just have that mindset myself and be around others who are uplifting. How does that phrase go? If the flowers are not blooming, don't blame the seeds. Something like that. Be in soil that nourishes you and helps you grow. And one of the things... Now, I've had a span of a career like you as well. I'm coming up on over 25,000 one-on-one hours of therapy. And I was writing a note, and I'm like, "How many times have I done this?" And we can do so many things as speech pathologists. We can write books. We can work in home health. We can become lobbyists. I know speech pathologists who have become lobbyists. We can become experts with exit modification or dysphagia or voice or pedes or adults — whatever we want to do. And we take the essence of being a speech pathologist, and you're right. It's who we are. It's what we do.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah. Wow, how did you calculate the number? The number of hours?

Mattie Murrey

By the number of years I've worked and the number of hours per week.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Oh, wow. Yeah.

Mattie Murrey

It was a roundabout estimate.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

What year did you graduate?

Mattie Murrey

1992.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Okay. So, I graduated in '78. It's so funny. Somebody had mentioned... So, my speech license is 7448. And it wasn't until I had a student tell me that those license numbers are based on the year that you got it. So, I guess I was still in... We were still under 10,000 people.

Mattie Murrey

I wonder what the numbers are today.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

I don't know! What's your number?



Mattie Murrey

01091498.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Is that your ASHA number, or is that your speech license? That's your license number?

Mattie Murrey

It's my ASHA number.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, no. So, [it's] your speech license number for the state that it's in.

Mattie Murrey

I don't have that one memorized. It's something like three or four digits.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Oh, so it's only four digits? He made it seem like this guy he'd had as a mentor, that his license was number one. I don't know. I don't know if that was true or not. Maybe that's a legend.

Mattie Murrey

Well, I have a very good friend of mine, who is just a very gifted voice therapist. And she's in her 70s, I believe. Going strong. She just finished a three-day, around-the-world voice webinar. She loves it. She loves it. And I hope to be doing the same. Let's jump back just a minute. You said you left the field for a short period of time. And my coaching niche is with speech pathologists who do struggle. They're new. They're transitioning. They're not sure where they want to go with their career. So, would you share with us why you became a speech pathologist and why you left?

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, sure. So, I first became a speech pathologist... The timing was interesting. I had just returned from Germany with my family. We lived abroad for a year. And I was just entering college. I had taken some college coursework at the University of Maryland when I was in Germany because it was affiliated with the American base. And my mom was working for the Americans. And my father was working on the German economy. So, I had to declare a major. And my grandmother had a stroke. And I would watch my grandmother with this. My mom was the one that really said, "Why don't you come see this speech therapist that's helping grandma?" And my grandmother had severe Broca's Aphasia. Of course, I didn't know that at the time. But she had severe Broca's Aphasia, and she was angry. She was really angry. And it was fascinating to watch this speech therapist talk with her. My mom realized that I was always interested in communication, that I had sort of a heart for interaction with people in a very personal way. She said, "Why don't you look into it?"



So, I did. And I started taking coursework, and I really liked it. And it just sort of seemed... It was as good as anything, right? The more I studied, the more I liked [it]. I went to the University of Florida to get my undergraduate degree. And when I had to sign up for grad school, I took my GREs. I bombed them. [I did] terrible on my GREs. I'm great at writing essays and writing stories, hence my thesis, hence my book. But give me a multiple choice question, and I want to annotate the notes on the side as to why I chose that answer. That doesn't work well. Anyway, when I failed to get into grad school at the University of Florida, I went and spoke to the professor and I said, "Listen, I am graduating from your course with summa cum laude." That's what I was graduating with. I said, "What's the purpose of the GREs?" They said, "Well, we want to predict how well you're going to do in grad school." And I said, "Doesn't my performance in your school matter?" No. So I went, "Well, I guess I was meant to go to California." So, I left and went to California. I established residency. I had friends that were living in the Bay area, in Mill Valley Sausalito. I started working as a waitress. I established residency. I ended up at San Diego State University, and graduated in 1978. And I started my clinical fellowship year [at] what I guess would now be really ill-named. It was called Crippled Children's Society back in the day. I know, can you imagine? How politically incorrect is that?

Mattie Murrey

I used to work for a nursing home called the Homme Home for the Aging. And when I worked in England, we worked with a group of students called The Stumbling Children.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

No!

Mattie Murrey

That was honestly the name of the group.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Oh my gosh. Wow. Yeah.

Mattie Murrey

But yours...

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, the Crippled Children's Society. I think it's now called just Easter Seals.

Mattie Murrey

Oh my gosh. Thank goodness we've come so far.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah, we have. And I did see a lot of medically fragile children in this setting. And I enjoyed it. I liked the medical aspect of it. And then I left that and went on to home care. And I have always been an independent contractor, literally, my entire career with the exception of one very brief stint — and I'll tell you about that — and then another where I was at an inpatient residential



facility in Seattle. But so, I got my degree in California. I lived in New York. I lived in Seattle, Washington. I lived in California. I lived in Florida. I was licensed in all of those states over the various periods of time that I worked in those places. And fortunately, I think in our field, it is very easy to find work, particularly in the home care field — also, probably in skilled nursing, although that's not really the setting that's my preference. So, I always worked as an independent contractor. And at a certain point after I left Crippled Children's Society, I was working on my own and being told quite often, "Oh, aren't you cute? You're so pretty." And [I was] just feeling like things were moving slowly. And because I was an independent contractor, I had no community of other therapists I was working with. I was on my own. And I was traveling a lot. Driving to people's homes. And at a certain point, I said, "I just want to develop my physical side." I was still in my 20s. I want to develop my physical side. I want to do things that are faster. So, I quit my job, sold my car, left my apartment, and decided to go work at Club Med — take a vacation, then maybe work at Club Med. This was back before there were cell phones, before there was internet. I had no idea whether any of that would work, but I had saved some money and decided I wanted to do that.

Well, I ended up with a raging case of hepatitis and had to come home. And it wasn't much longer after that, that I personally had a medical crisis where I ended up in the hospital. And I will never forget how things changed. I remember lying in bed. I was very weak. I was still tethered to IVs. And this one nurse came in, and she pushed the curtain back and just in the brightest, lightest, most delicious tone of voice and kindness said, "Good morning, darlin'." And I looked up at her and I went, "You're so pretty." And I finally got what my patients really meant. It really had nothing to do with her being pretty, although she was. It was how she made me feel. She made me feel like there was hope. She made me feel like there was something that was going to shift. And I left the hospital after that, and I reentered the field with a whole new perspective of how I was going to work with patients and what my real purpose was. It wasn't about how good I was, how smart I was, what my protocols were. It was about my patients. It was ultimately about my patients, and what could I do to help them find their way?

Mattie Murrey

Another goosebumps story. I had one of those myself today, where the woman I was evaluating had a stroke. And I asked her what her goals were. She said, "Well, I don't know, but you speak my language." And that is where the magic and the reward of being a speech pathologist comes from. And we don't need recognition. But it's those conversations where we know we're changing that life for the better.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Absolutely. It's funny you should say that. But yes, you did speak her language. And she knew that you knew that, and that safety and security that she felt by knowing she was in capable hands. And I often looked around, as I would drive around, and look at buildings that were built by people. And I'd say, "The people that built these buildings have something tangible to look at. They've left something behind. What can I say I've left behind?" And then I start to drive around in the neighborhoods, and I recognize, I know the person that lives there. And I know that



person. And I helped that person get through this crisis. And this person, I know their personal story. And I started to stack those things up as the contribution that I made — not so much what I did for them, but for how I was a part of an intimate, sacred journey that they were on.

Mattie Murrey

Very honorable. Fresh SLP is my legacy. This is me paying it back to the speech pathologists coming behind us.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

I think it's fantastic that you've elected to do that and expand and see what's so possible and different and limitless in our field. I mean, I will say, that is one really phenomenal aspect of our field: how broad it is. And I see all these young people now creating materials and doing things that are thrilling.

Mattie Murrey

We never would have done that. It wasn't even on the horizon.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

No, not at all. Yeah.

Mattie Murrey

Final question: What words of advice did somebody give you that you did not follow and you were glad you did not follow?

Tsgoyna Tanzman

I am glad that I did not follow the advice to stay put. When I first left the field for a while, [people would say], "Why would you leave? You've invested all this time in your education." And maybe this is crazy advice to tell somebody, but I was really happy that I satisfied the drive and the curiosity and the urge to expand and to see, and then to come back so enriched by a change of experience — to come back with something that was so much more meaningful. So, I'm really glad that I didn't choose to go with what was the known thing behind door number one and really expand and explore what was behind door number three. No matter that it landed me in the hospital. Whatever it was, it was really valuable. Really valuable.

Mattie Murrey

Well, thank you for sharing that with us.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Yeah.

Mattie Murrey

Before we met, I was mulling over how to say your name. And I was just trying different ways of saying it. And no matter what I came up with, it reminds me of those beautiful... I want to say sequoia cactuses, but those beautiful...



Tsgoyna Tanzman

Sequoia trees!

Mattie Murrey

Sequoia trees. There we go. That are rooted so deep down in the soil. And I must say, your name, the way I envision you, matches your soul.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Oh, well, thank you so much. And I will say that for my 65th birthday, I went to Sequoia National Forest. I went there. These are trees that are 4,000 years old. And they're enormous. And I'm going to make one minor correction for you, but you'll appreciate the correction. So, I thought, too, that the roots must be so deep to hold these enormous, majestic trees. But the truth is the roots are shallow. But what happens is, in the grove, they bind together. The roots of neighboring trees bind together. And that is absolutely the most remarkable thing. And I think that, more than anything, tells us that we are a community. We need each other.

Mattie Murrey

Yes, absolutely. Well, this will go down as one of my favorite podcasts. Thank you very much for the time.

Tsgoyna Tanzman

Thank you, Mattie. Thank you for everything you do. Thank you so much.

