

Fear Me Out Podcast

Episode 28

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

Guest Speaker

Glen Phillips - Musician

Kim Fauskee 00:00

Today's guest is a familiar face to those fans of the band Toad the wet sprocket. He also has a very successful solo career. With a new album set to be released in October, success found Glenn Phillips early, and he's been trying to make sense of it ever since. So I hope you join us as we discuss with Glenn, fame, love and faith in the continued introspective journey of a life well lived.

Dr. Dana 00:34

There are two basic motivating forces fear and love. When we're afraid, we pull back from life. When we're in love, we open up to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance.

Fear Me Out 00:53

Coming to you from our studio in Santa Barbara, California. This is the Fear Me Out Podcast. We're not your typical Self-Help Program. Our show takes a deep dive into those psychological issues that affect us on a daily basis. We hope to shift your perspective and have you experiencing emotions differently. Now here are your hosts Kim Fauskee. And Dr. Dana Saperstein.

Kim Fauskee 01:15

So Glen, I had harbored in my mind this fantasy of wanting to be a rock star at one point in my life and walking out on the stage to 10s of 1000s of adoring fans. And when you and I talked about you coming and before going on tour, I kind of went on your website, and I looked at your tour schedule. And that fantasy just went away.

Glenn Phillips 01:38

Yeah, it's a job. You guys are going to want to call this I guess... the second act of Toad the wet sprocket going back out on tour this summer. And to me, it looks more than a job. Well, it's I mean, it's been a life. It's kind of all I've ever known. Locked down actually was the longest I'd spent at home since my youngest daughter was born. And she's 20 now. So... I'm gone, usually about a third of the year. So it's a lot of days on the road. Yeah.

Kim Fauskee 02:16

And are you too? Are you touring? Again? This is not an entertainment episode. Well, we'll get to the Glenn Phillips here in a second. But are you touring on your own as well? So the band Yeah, I

Glenn Phillips 02:27

also too, are solo. I just did a couple weeks of house concerts, private concerts up and down the coast. And I have a solo album coming out in October of this year. So I'll be out all of November and probably in the New Year solo.

Kim Fauskee 02:45

You're a one busy man. Yeah, it's

Glenn Phillips 02:49

it's a strange. It's a strange job in a lot of ways. And, and my natural rhythms. I'm a person who tends to wake up at five or six in the morning. And so going on tour is always my big challenge is usually just getting enough sleep. Because working till two and then you know, it's easier in a bus because there's no sunlight whatsoever. But I ended up guarding my

Kim Fauskee 03:18

sleep. You change your circadian rhythm. I bet I bet.

Glenn Phillips 03:21

Yeah. Not as much as I'd like. Yeah, I wish I could do more.

Kim Fauskee 03:27

So I'm assuming that a lot of people that will listen to this podcast will at least know your name or know the name of Toad, the wet sprocket. It's been out there for a number of years. Very popular. You've found success early in life. Right? I mean, you guys I

Glenn Phillips 03:47

wouldn't recommend to anyone.

Kim Fauskee 03:50

And and I know you enough to know that you had some trouble embracing that success. So can you talk about that a little bit?

Glenn Phillips 03:58

Yeah, I mean, I had a pretty severe case of imposter syndrome and still do sometimes. I mean, was afraid I was gonna get caught and everybody would figure out that I was a fraud. Didn't know what I was saying or doing and certainly didn't feel at home kind of in a lot of those circles. I met some great people and met some amazing individuals because of all this. But I always felt pretty outside. And I also knew, I mean, I tell the story a lot but I had a theater teacher David Holmes at St. Marcus high in Santa Barbara and it was his first year and so I was a freshman and I was a big theater nerd. I was in choir that was what I love. And I remember him talking about becoming a teacher because he loved the theater more than anything, but he didn't want to always have to be hustling and selling himself and dealing with the heartbreak of public exposure. Measure and I, at 15, resonated really strongly with that and decided I would be a teacher. So my plan was to, you know, when I was 18, go to San Francisco State and do social sciences, arts education, and just teach at a high school and keep the thing I love

but not have it, you know, ruined by having it become my job. And instead my band got signed when I was 18 or 18.

Dr. Dana 05:32

That's when it Yeah. And so I was quite young. What that is quite young

Glenn Phillips 05:36

is young. I started at City College in town when I was 16. And finished two years there, and we got signed, I miss dead week, you know, before all my finals, because we flew out to New York and signed the contract. And then we already had two albums recorded. We did them really quick and dirty when I was 17, and the beginning of 18. And so Sony put those records out, so there wasn't even this pause while we did our first record, we went on the road immediately. And I had had kind of my career peak by the time I was 22.

Dr. Dana 06:21

That's amazing. That's still so young. It was so young.

Glenn Phillips 06:24

And so yeah, the career of the band broke up. By the time I was 27. We took about five years apart and got back together. But so it was a very quick and even accidental trip, I don't think there are many people who end up getting signed on a major label or being a successful musician who don't sacrifice everything to be there. And we didn't even try to get signed by somebody in Los Angeles who worked at ASCAP, the performance Rights Association, he was dubbing off copies of our first dragon, you know, dubbing off cassette copies, and he started sending them to record companies.

Dr. Dana 07:09

That's amazing. So with your permission, or did you know,

Glenn Phillips 07:11

We didn't know who he was? So there was a phone number on the cassette. And so we were getting calls. And, you know, people would say, Nick terzo sent me your tape. It's great. And it was really accidental. And not, yeah, not what I had counted on, not what I thought my life would be like. So and once again, we were talking before you started recording my I grew up in an academic household, my parents were both, you know, hard science PhDs. And there was just, you know, my brother went to a medic cow, like there's this x expectation. And I kind of assumed that the band would tour for a couple of years, put out a record, get dropped, and then I'd go back to school. And instead, it's 30

Kim Fauskee 08:12

So you had mentioned five years into it that you hit your Pinnacle already. Dana and I talk, you know, this we're writing a book on fear called fear me out, just like the podcast. There's a chapter in the book called The fear of success. There's a difference between the fear of failure and the fear of success. And the fear of success is generally people that have met with success and don't think they could ever replicate it again. Did you feel like have it right now? Yeah. Like, and I would imagine that from an artist,

musical artists, especially in in we had this great album that sold a lot of albums, we had a lot of people come into concerts. So how do we go up that next time?

Glenn Phillips 08:55

I mean, at the time it was a little easier, like the record we did. So the record called fear that had all I want to walk on the ocean are these big cats and kind of, you know, end even though I would say the process of that record was not instant. All I want was released nine months into the album cycle. We ended up playing over 300 shows for that album alone. And so we came back and we were the season touring band, and we made what is probably our best album, Dulcinea was the second major label record and all agree with that. Yeah. And it did well, not as well as the other and then our third record, we kind of I can't blame it entirely on this because I know there's always more factors but we kind of crossed the head of Sony. We didn't work with the producer he wanted and he let us know. And we also had made the mistake of taking a large advance because we had a couple platinum records. We figured we'd, you don't really get paid on the back end when you do that, and so we got paid up front. And you can't really do that without playing the game. And we didn't play the game. And so as punishment, we were kind of told by the head of the company that the record would stall as soon as their expenses were recouped. You won't get another single, we're going to pull it back down, you know, it was, it was, he was that kind of a guy. And so and so the last record didn't do as well. And then we tried to make another record. And there was a lot under the hood with the band, which I don't need to get into. Suffice it to say, we met when I was a freshman in high school, and they were seniors, our dynamics were locked in at a kind of adolescent stage. And there was just a lot that we didn't know how to work out. And we tried to make another record and just realized nobody wanted to be there. You know, it wasn't working. And there was nothing we could do to make it work. And we probably should have taken a break. But instead, we broke up. And

Kim Fauskee 11:16

as all good bands seem to do at that stage,

Glenn Phillips 11:18

yeah. And then I couldn't get a record deal. And found myself at 27 with two kids unable to work,

Kim Fauskee 11:33

and you're not getting a record deal on your own was were you blacklisted by Sony a little bit at that point or being difficult or

Glenn Phillips 11:41

I was deemed difficult. I was let know that I was an ungrateful little shit.

Kim Fauskee 11:50

In no uncertain terms,

Glenn Phillips 11:51

and found out a couple people tried to sign me on to some labels and found out that they weren't allowed to I was I was considered difficult. And so I didn't do myself any favors. I was so hurt by the

band brick breaking up. And by I had this idea that if I tried to do things I'd be successful with, you know, because that's what happened initially. So I didn't really know how to play the game. I didn't know how to be strategic. I didn't know that first impressions are kind of as important as they are. I mean, I did stupid things like making acoustic demos of songs because I figured the things you can't fake are a voice and a good song. And I didn't realize there's not a lot of imagination in that your demo should be a finished product. It should sound exactly like what's going to be on the radio. And I would have meetings with people and I would talk about how awful the music industry was and bad mouth me. I was young and dumb and egotistical and ungrateful. And so I did a lot of damage and a lot of self sabotage, and found myself unable to get a record deal. And so

Kim Fauskee 13:13

you do and I don't mean to interrupt your train of thought here. But do you know where that anger or angst kind of emanated from there? Was it it? Was it still the depression from breaking up the band?

Glenn Phillips 13:29

It's hard to tell. I mean, I see it as repetitive. You know, if I have a story, and once again, it's most people's story, if you take away every bit of narration, it's this idea that you're somehow unlovable and unworthy, right? Like underneath, everything is just, oh, I'm unlovable, I'm unworthy. So if good things happen to me, it's an accident or it's not for something I did, or, and so this combination, I tend to be very binary. So I would go from feeling really full of myself to being egotistical. Like I was kind of owed a career I was owed success into total collapse. I'm a piece of shit, I'm worthless. I'm a terrible musician. Of course, I was faking it, and I got caught. And so I went into like a tailspin of depression. Heading up, like right around y2k, right in that period. There was a year where I don't think I read a single book. Anything that was interesting, was too stimulating. And then for some reason. My wife, we watched, Saving Private Ryan of all movies to watch when you're incredibly depressed. And I didn't sleep for an entire week. All I could think about was how fragile my family was. I was worried. I like when I was near y2k, I got a little obsessed with societal collapse. And I ended up not on antidepressants now. But, you know, I remember taking Zoloft and I had not read a book in a year and I ended up reading the dune trilogy in a week

Kim Fauskee 15:18

after so last afternoon,

Dr. Dana 15:21

it will come right up.

Glenn Phillips 15:22

It saved my life, I think. I mean, I don't think there's a danger in SSRIs where people will get put on them by a family physician who prescribed yours. Yeah. And then there's no requirement for follow up and no plan to get off and no necessity even. I mean, I was taking therapy on my own, but there's, it wasn't a comprehensive thing. And at some point, you're just on Zoloft. But you haven't dealt with anything. But definitely. It got my nose above water.

Dr. Dana 15:59

So you know, enough to get some help.

Glenn Phillips 16:02

I knew well enough. Well, I mean, once again, I hadn't slept for a week, I think my wife, now ex wife, but I think she was really scared. I wasn't going to survive. And so. So I got help. Yeah. And so. But I remember this, you know, it's interesting, because if the story is I'm not lovable, I'm not worthy, right? You can move it to Oh, it's in my band, and they don't get me and I'm stuck in this band. And then it's the music industry, and it hates me. And then we can project on anybody we want. Yeah, you can make that story apply to whatever you can make that feeling apply to kind of whatever story happens to be handy. And so yeah, it caught up with me. So I mean, I've been tried to be really open about that. I've dealt with depression, and I don't think you need to have, you know, I used to wonder what I like, heard about repressed memories. And I remember for years, like, wishing that I would go in therapy and fine now in that terrible thing that had happened to me. And I never did it ever happened, and I never did. I think it was attachment issues as a child. Well, that's

Dr. Dana 17:16

a terrible thing.

Glenn Phillips 17:17

It's a terrible thing. But I wanted like the, you know, the trauma with a villain. You know, and just, you know, I understand that, you know, attachment is a thing, but, but, you know, I, I knew people who had the terrible thing happen, and it's like, oh, well, you're allowed to. That's great. It's not about you. I don't know. And so I think in my own journey, I've had a lot to unpack about. You know, which I would say is also a really privileged thing to go, what do I want out of life to even ask that question is insanely privileged? Right? What do I want to do? How do I want to move forward? So really lucky questions to get to?

Kim Fauskee 18:07

Was that question coming up in your mind at that point, then?

Glenn Phillips 18:11

Yeah, I mean, the thing was, at that time, I went on the road, and probably really sabotaged any kind of possibility for a solo career. I had two kids, soon after, I had a third and I had a family to support and, and so I didn't get to ask the question, what do I want to do? Like I felt like I had to go on the road and I remember getting letters back when it was still letters from people just saying, you obviously don't want to be doing this. You look miserable on stage. Just couldn't people notice. Oh, yeah, I was just I was a walking wound. i And, and all right, said songs. But you know, it, yeah, definitely broadcast it and lost a lot of potential audience and when the band got back together was still kind of toxic. And we broke up a number of times, it's taken us a very long time to kind of be a healthy family. Right? We've never necessarily been friends who had hang out when we weren't working together. It's a very old relationship. And so it has that familial quality. But I think we found our peace and found out how to accept each other and try to change each other as the years have gone by and, and forgive each other and realize that forgiveness isn't like hearing somebody apologize for somebody, it's forgiving them.

Kim Fauskee 19:50

Yeah, Glenn, do you think that this came with age and experience?

Glenn Phillips 19:53

Probably, yeah. Yeah. I mean, you know, you get kicked around a few times and you start to realize that if certain situations if certain feelings repeat themselves that you're the common denominator. So to recognize

Dr. Dana 20:08

that there that part of what you might have been dealing with was more emotional neglect than it was any sort of overt abuse as a kid,

Glenn Phillips 20:19

an emotional, what was the word after neglect? I don't know if I would say emotional neglect.

Dr. Dana 20:27

The reason I asked you that is because oftentimes people believe that trauma is only about the things that happened to you. Yeah, not the things that don't happen for you. So a lot of times when I work with people ask them to consider that it's usually a combination of both.

Glenn Phillips 20:42

Yeah, I imagine there's elements, you know, and I don't mean purposeful, but they do know, not purposeful, blameless, generational. Yeah.

Dr. Dana 20:52

I mean, you come from a generation where emotional connection was not a not the most important part of being a member of a family. Yeah.

Glenn Phillips 21:00

And I grew up I mean, I remember growing up and did you ever read? What was it? Kurt Vonnegut

Dr. Dana 21:11

Slaughterhouse Five?

Glenn Phillips 21:12

No, God's only message to his creation, a breakfast of champions. Oh, yeah. He's my favorite. Yeah. God, he keeps being just as good. I started rereading them again during lockdown. And he's so good. But you know, this idea. I remember thinking, Am I part of an experiment? Is everybody being nice to me? Am I like, mentally deficient, but everybody, like, I remember sneaking in on my parents and trying to see if they were deactivated. And it was this feeling like, I felt so intensely that I didn't understand how, how people could function, how adults could function, how the world could function. If everyone was feeling as intensely as I was, it didn't, it felt like it was often all I could do to kind of just, yeah, pass for normal, right? I feel like I spent a large portion of my childhood hiding, or passing and there was something, you know, the interesting thing, right, whereas most people, I think the fear of being on

stage, the fear of public speaking is massive. And I never had that on stage, I could stop being myself, I could be someone else. Or I could be transmitting something larger than me. And there was something about being in an audience that actually took fear away from me. And, you know, sometimes if a close family is up in the front, I'll get nervous that I get stage fright when people I love are visible. But I loved high school theater, choir, anything kind of, to express yourself. Yeah, it was the safe place for expression, it was a safe place to be the kind of, you know, freak, I always felt like, so

Dr. Dana 23:09

Do you consider yourself to be a really sensitive person by nature?

Kim Fauskee 23:13

Yeah. I feel very Have you ever listened to his music.

Dr. Dana 23:19

But that doesn't always mean you can be really sad, and express yourself really well. But part of what you're describing is, in a certain way, that you probably were really different, but not in a pathological way, but in a sensitive way. Because I don't think that most people realize that degree of sensitivity a person goes through life with is genetically programmed into their nervous system. So oftentimes, when you're really sensitive by nature, you experience reality differently than most people. And it can make you feel like there's something really wrong with you. Because you're surrounded by people have normal sensitivity, and the house is on fire, and they don't even notice. And you're like, hey, it's it's hot in here, and we're burning up. No, what did you know? We're fine. Everything's okay. Yeah, because you're feeling everything on everything on such an acute level, that you really do experience reality differently. And if nobody explains to you that this is your genetic makeup, I can't even tell you the numbers of people, including this man here, who suffered enormously as a result of just being different. And feeling like there was something really wrong because of that difference. And then, in a way, I mean, I obviously I don't know you, but maybe I'll

Glenn Phillips 24:34

make an appointment for later. But it sounds , I mean, that that resonates. I felt very outside and othered for most of my childhood and even in high school where I was, you know, it was pointed out to me at some point that I was actually kind of popular in high school, and I felt but I felt very outside, I felt you know, and I had I had a, you know, close group of love people. But yeah, I have always been a little bit at the mercy of my my emotions and they're, they're really intense,

Dr. Dana 25:18

I would expect that you would feel things more strongly than most people and that you would be able to intuit what's happening around you and more acutely than most people. The upside of being really sensitive is heightened creativity, and the ability to come up with novel solutions to problems. The downside of it's not explained to you as you can often feel like there's something really wrong with you. And you make a big deal about things that you shouldn't, things affect you more than the more you know more than they should, and on and on and on. And if you come from a very intellectual family, they're not going to necessarily understand what you bring to the table. Not because there's something wrong with them. Yeah. Because it's not their way of

Glenn Phillips 25:58

it wasn't a place where you get held If you cry, because it was you go to your room until you could act like a human being, I think was the phrase.

Kim Fauskee 26:06

I think when I grew up in the same house.

Glenn Phillips 26:09

And once again, a really loving I mean, you know, I think zero malevolence and

Dr. Dana 26:16

yeah, I'm not looking to indict anyone. Yeah, but I have just

Glenn Phillips 26:19

in case my mom ever I want her to know that I love her and I feel very loved by her. But I think there was more of a generate I'm, you know, touch affection. It's one of my biggest, you know, that's the easiest way to soothe me is just hold me and be quiet for a while.

Dr. Dana 26:38

What did your mom tell you that you were?

Kim Fauskee 26:40

She called me different, Amanda and not in a good way? Right. And why? Because I'm sitting here listening to glengoyne. Yeah, yeah, exactly. I know exactly what you're talking about. Right? This is familiar. Yeah. My question to you is, do you feel that way still, that you're kind of, in some circumstance on the outside looking in?

Glenn Phillips 27:02

Some, I feel helpless a lot. I feel like I don't know what I want. I don't have answers. And I'm terrified of both success and failure. Just trying to make sense of everything. Yeah, and figure out and I mean, these days to, like, you know, everybody's carrying, carrying a lot, right. I mean, not even these times, human beings. Like there's one of my favorite songs, we'll talk about community singing later. These are the things I've gotten into in the last few years. But there's a song by Lawrence Cole, it's just called the Lyric is just be kind. Everyone carries a heavy load, just over and over kind of a mantra. And it's difficult to know how to calibrate these days, in terms of what to bring out as a performer. What subjects to talk about or not talk about, I have very strong feelings about the damage that social media does to the world. And yet, that's my outlet. And I've also seen, you know, any comment about anything that could be construed as political, which everything can be right now. Turns into trolling in the comments and people being violent towards each other, it upsets me greatly. And so it's it's true. And, you know, the world in general, two shootings that I know of this week, right, two mass shootings this week. environmental destruction, imminent, authoritarian theocracy, war, you know, got to got to start being worried about, you know, nuclear annihilation. Again, I hadn't thought it added years in time. Yeah, that had just been sitting back in the old violin, we

Kim Fauskee 28:49

have to think a certain Russian president for that, bring him back to our mind,

Glenn Phillips 28:53

and just the rise of, you know, conspiracy thinking and kind of the post truth society so I can I, I can spin off on these and I found, you know, once again, I have to really exercise. meditative states, whether it's yoga, or meditation itself, or playing music or and, you know, adequate rest, staying away from alcohol there, there are just a number of things that I am getting better at doing regularly. That helped me to kind of regulate my lack of a filter, if that makes sense. Because when I know these things, I can't unknow them. I can't think them and I don't think we're supposed to have all this information. Like you're leaving as an organism. It's too much,

Dr. Dana 29:51

but I'm wondering if you would realize that you're designed in a much different way than the average person.

Glenn Phillips 29:58

I don't know. Either.

Dr. Dana 30:00

I say that because a lot of people that come to see me are super sensitive by nature. And most people that are super sensitive in that way feel like there's something really wrong with them, because they've been made to feel ashamed of the sensitivity, and where it takes them in the course of their life. And so as people to think about this notion, what of your 6'10"? What would that be like? What would life be like for you for that talk? Because I actually have a friend who's that tall, and he doesn't live a normal life at all. No, he's a normal person, except for how tall he is. He can't even walk through a doorway without being super careful about banging his head,

Kim Fauskee 30:35

he had a bigger bed to whatever, we need a bigger bed,

Glenn Phillips 30:38

I'm short enough, say perfectly comfortable in coach seats I love.

Dr. Dana 30:43

You can't find clothes, you can't find a car that you fit in. The hardest thing for him is that he can't go into a place that serves alcohol. Because every time he goes somewhere, somebody under five, six months of fight them, oh, God, because so many people have issues with their fathers. Right? Yeah, he's everybody's father is about Jayanti is it doesn't matter whether he wants to be or not, come up to his chest, you know. And so he doesn't get to live a normal life, not through any choice of his own. But because he is in the 98th percentile for height. So if I ask you to consider that maybe you're in the 95th percentile for sensitivity. That means you don't get to live a normal life because 95% of the people in the world don't experience reality in the same way that you do.

Glenn Phillips 31:29

Yeah, I get very overwhelmed. In it, it's interesting, and then trying to figure out how to work around that. It's like, well, I'm also a creative and at least currently a public figure of sorts. Yeah. And so what's worth adding? What's worth adding to a conversation? What's worth talking about? And what are you know, and as the years go by? Yeah, finding, trying to find some kind of refinement, right, in terms of like, if I'm going to be up on stage, what makes it actually worth people coming to see and I had, I think kind of post divorce, which was eight, nine years ago. Kind of a personal spiritual journey after the divorce, which once again, was like, I feel like the last year is finally, I don't every day, like kind of ruminate and feel that loss. And not just the loss of the relationship, but it's the house, the family, the station, the comfort that like it's there, there was so much kind of in that package. And it's, it's been incredible to feel like I'm on the other side of it. Once again, right now I'm engaged, which I never thought I would be capable of again, I didn't know I've spent half of the relationship I'm in with a huge part of me. I remember very early on having this feeling like, Oh, she's amazing. This could last the next 20 years. It's gonna hurt everybody to get out now. It was this very clear run. She has amazing. She is so good for you. So this can't be right. You have to get away.

Kim Fauskee 33:34

You'd already set up the self sabotage. Yeah, right. Because this is this is too good. This is too good for me. This is too good to happen. Yeah, I can't, I can't deal with it.

Glenn Phillips 33:45

Yeah. I don't want to lose it again. Right to agonizing? Absolutely.

Kim Fauskee 33:50

I've been through it. I know.

Glenn Phillips 33:51

Yeah. And so it's a and thank goodness, I can communicate well enough about these things in partnership. I mean, I think part of the skill you learn as you grow, is being able to know what's crazy and and let somebody know you're having a hard time instead of confusing them with your internal narrative, which doesn't necessarily save them all the pain of it.

Dr. Dana 34:20

No, but at least they understand where it's coming from. They Yeah, they

Glenn Phillips 34:23

can get where it's coming from, or, you know, it's been a long, you know, a long rethinking. And even with music, which you know, since the career, it's weird doing what you love as a career, because when it doesn't go well, it feels like some kind of punishment, it hurts the creative thing you love. And so I found these kinds of more spiritual communities where music was really at the core Have it spent a lot of time in yurts. And so And through that found community singing, which is. So Wednesday nights, when I'm in Santa Barbara, I lead, I haven't gone public with it, because I still something I've kind of kept to myself mostly. So I haven't advertised or tried to make it anything other than word of mouth. But

it's essentially kind of like church without a specific dogma. And so think of it is like Unitarian Church, but just the choir part.

Kim Fauskee 35:42

So no sermon,

Glenn Phillips 35:44

no sermon, and just singing songs that are designed to be learned quickly in sung together, so you know, anywhere from 1540 people in a circle. And a lot of the songs are maybe three parts countermelody, which is easier for non singers to hold. So it's a lot of people who were voice shamed when they were young, or have church damage of some kind. And they miss just singing and praying, and I had this, you know, realization in the last few years, it's like, Oh, I really love praying, I've been never been able to believe in like, kind of the Old Testament God, you know, you know, as a kid, you know, even with the rabbi was like, I don't believe any of this. And he's like, fine, it's ethics, don't worry about it. So that idea that the, the act of prayer is just saying thank you, to the universe for existing, it doesn't matter if it's listening or not. Gratitude feels really good. And if you combine that with song, and then if you combine that with community and people singing together, it's amazingly powerful. It's a fantastic drug with absolutely no negative side effects. And so, so, once a week, I, when I'm home, I lead, lead this, this choir singing the songs. And it's, that's been an amazing thing to discover and to find joy in and it really changed how I thought of music. Because I've been singing sad songs in order to make people happy my entire life. And I realized you could actually see a happy song, and makes people feel happy to imagine

Kim Fauskee 37:37

that go figure, right? Yeah. And

Glenn Phillips 37:39

so it's changed kind of the mission statement. When I go back to playing live, I try to bring that kind of medicine with me, but not talk about it in ways that sounds so New Agey or spiritual, that they'll put people off because people have lots of triggers. I have a lot of triggers. Yes, indeed. So there's that.

Kim Fauskee 38:09

Has that formed that community? Has that changed? You personally in any way? You talked about how it did change your music, your perspective on music? But did it change you personally in any way? Finding, finding this kind of community? Because I think it's essential for all of us to find our community.

Glenn Phillips 38:26

It is it's daunting in certain ways. It's, I mean, it is, you know, a community subset, right. So when we started singing together, it was right after the right after the debris flow. And we were singing at a friend's house who was, you know, close to the path of that. And so there was people were going through a lot and needed some anchoring. And we had deaths in the community we had, and it was odd being essentially unprepared and untrained for anything other than being a narcissist, which you know, as a lead singer in a band. You're always the center of attention, and you get to be charismatic for people, but I've always been in charge, it's my songs, my words, my audience who's come to hear

my songs and my words and whatever I do it and so serving is a different thing, a very different skill set. And there's there's, you know, elements of groundedness or being comfortable around other people that I think are useful for that, but it was also a real crash course in tending to people and one that I think I've done a really uneven job of and there's further questions and community as well of, you know, the songs we sing in the circles of increasing sensitivity around cultural appropriation around. You know, any number of things. I mean, it's kind of endless when you start paying attention. Right. And so you know, my fiance's favorite quote is Mary Oliver attention is the beginning of devotion. Right? It's like her.

Kim Fauskee 40:34

That's her go to,

Glenn Phillips 40:35

that is her go to. And so the Yeah, how to be with community how to and how to also speak from the heart and not edit myself or avoid my easy tears. I mentioned Lawrence Cole. Earlier, he does this amazing kind of do you know, Francis Weller, the wild, wild country of grief was subohm Phu and I forget who the other people were, basically, these grief ceremonies that are a certain amount of how can I say there's a certain amount of workshopping to it, meaning you're, you know, you're breaking into groups of three and talking about your personal experiences. And it's brilliantly set up so that it's not a pity party, and so that nobody's kind of taking all the air out of the room. And so kind of thinking about the field of grief and what everybody carries and understanding. You know, everyone's carrying their own load. And the the focus of the ceremonies is, you're singing a song that's about 45 seconds long for about four hours. And I mean, I keep finding the importance of moving at indigenous time. You know, as Westerners, we like to get things done in an hour, right, you got a session, you get in, you get out. And there's places you can't hit. Unless you're really used to going deep really quick, or unless you take the time to really let yourself unwind. And so when you start singing the song, people are Drumming and singing and dancing. And there is a a grief altar, there is an anger altar for people who've met with abuse or mistreatment, and ancestor altar and forgiveness altar. And basically, you're either singing or drumming and dancing. Or if you feel something welling up inside you, you go to the altar, and somebody goes to the altar with Yun witnesses, you if you need a hand on your back, they can put it there. And you go until you're done. And then you come back to the people singing, and people hug you and say thank you. And then you start singing and you just do that for four hours. And then you do you do it again the next night. Doing it two nights in a row is great, because everyone's primed and you're not dealing with narration or storytelling or these things we wrap around our pure grief. Right? And you know, the field, David White talks about it so well that grief is Love Plus time, which equals loss. Right? That you you care for things Martine preK Tao as well with the book, the smell of rain on Dust dust, Yep, yeah, which is where the mice on grief and praise came from was from his talk, and just getting to experience grief and a pure form. And in a form where no one tells you to stop. No one needs words from you, where basically you get to be supported up until you are there to support other people. And you just do it by singing this song that's just rolling and rolling for hours on end. And it's not a dirge. It's a it's a lively song, and it's joyful. And it's an amazing experience. And so the more I've done things like this, the more I've thought about like I don't know what what purposes music has historically had before it was commodified or turned into pop songs or rock music or even before it was turned into something that carried a division of performer and audience. And it's

functioned in every society until very recently as a communal act. And so I've you know, for the last five or six years been doing the choir leading and and trying to figure out if there's room to bridge that into what I do in the rock'n'roll world. How separate those worlds are and how separate they aren't. But yeah, and running, running a number of experiments. I mean, anyway, that was, that was a long lot of words that I just said.

Kim Fauskee 45:22

You've also done a deep dive into death. Dana and I have done a couple episodes on the fear of death. We've had a grief counselor from hospice, Dana's wife was a hospice nurse. And it's one of these subjects that obviously nobody wants to talk about. But I think it's important in your journey through life, that you actually come to a realization that at some point, it's going to end and that you're going to be okay with it. When that happens. Yeah. And so can you talk a little bit about your journey through that introspection into death?

Glenn Phillips 46:04

Well, it's, I mean, it came to me, you know, first my dad passed away when I was 27. I was the other thing that happened the year the band broke up, coincidence? Probably not. And I was with him in the room when he passed, it was just the two of us was really beautiful. And then got to see my grandmother through a lot of her hospice. My former wife's grandmother came to die at our house and died with us with the kids, they got to experience that and see her off. And so I've felt really fortunate to have good deaths at home in my life, if that makes sense. I think it's really a tragedy, how little we got to experience that. And you know, even God, five years ago now, my best friend passed away is so there's been, there's death around. After divorce, I found that divorce literature wasn't doing it for me. So I started reading Stephen Jenkinson, who wrote die wise, which is the most austere cover ever, if you look at it, I thought it originally the first time I saw that book, it's like this black cover. And I thought it said DVC I had to be German. It was so. So Stark, but I was really curious about him started listening to a lot of talks by David White, and reading a lot of David's poetry. Yeah. And, also, yeah, Martine Patel and his book on on grief and praise, right, this idea that grief and praise in the Mayan language, they're the same thing, they are the two sides of the same coin. They're both about love. However, the things you love will change or go away. And so the grief is praising that which you love and have lost and praises, grieving that which you love and will lose, which is ultimately everything. So I think between that, and won't go deep into that. But I think, you know, in my experience with kind of, you know, ceremonial, psychedelic work, death experiences are the most difficult in the most profound. And I think having the experience of consciousness without ego and the experience of really feeling as though you you may not come back and it's it's profoundly freeing to experience that, I don't know if it tells me anything about an afterlife or a spiritual world or anything, you know, I just carry a lot less fear of death. I have a strange amount of fear of life. Weirdly, like last year, I was recording an ailment. I was hearing my heartbeat in my ear and saw a doctor and went to an ear doctor, and these could be that, you know, you might have a tumor, probably benign. They're mostly benign, but it could be a brain tumor. And I had this moment of going like, oh, I have a brain tumor. I have two years. Thank God. I know exactly. What I want to do now, like I was so relieved, you

Kim Fauskee 50:02

had your out,

Glenn Phillips 50:03

I had my, the weird thing was, it wasn't just an out. Because I worry, it's been pointed out to me by my therapists and others, like I have a simultaneous worry that I'll never I didn't get home right after my divorce. So I don't think I'll ever be, I don't know if I'll ever be able to afford a home in my hometown. And if I can not, it still wouldn't be cheap enough that I could hope to retire there, right? You know, the current, it's just insane. And so either I need to get rich, or move, or just, you know, have enough social capital that I can rent somebody's back room for cheap when I'm older. But I worry about retiring. And then if I buy a house in town, that I won't have any money for retirement because I didn't save enough. And so I have this, and then I think, oh, but um, my dad died at 59. So I don't even have 10 years left. So I'm gonna like, and so it's this weird, contradictory, I'm like, paralyzed by worrying about having enough to retire. I'm also paralyzed by thinking I'm not gonna live very long. And I better stop waiting. And so there was something about this feeling of like, Oh, two years, awesome, I'm going to live to the hilt, I'm going to make sure everybody I know knows their knows that they are loved, I'm going to get rid of every bit of extraneous junk in my life. So my kids don't need to clean it, I'll do my Swedish death cleaning, I'm going to stop wasting time trying to get ahead in my career, and I will do things that feed my soul. And I will make be like, it was so

Dr. Dana 51:36

freeing. So are you disappointed that it didn't turn out? So

Glenn Phillips 51:39

a little bit, but I also know that I get used to things and so that I would probably find things to worry about in the two year process again, but it was really worth noting. I mean, I've wondered for years, I have friends who've had cancer and survived and have this feeling like everyday is a bonus. And they tended, not not uniformly but often, to become very happy people. Because they become very present tense, and very gratitude filled. And I've kept thinking that spiritual, you know, spiritual goals are to have the cancer experience without having to have cancer first. Just to get that, that state before it's a, you know, and once again, practicing dying, whether that's meditation or ceremonial work or other, there's a lot of ways to get there. But I think it's a really freeing thing to do. And I think that idea, you know, Buddhism talks about, like, you have to know how to die in order to learn how to live, right, and everybody carries that, you know, combination of their fear of their mortality, their knowledge of their mortality, and feeling. You know, that terror of the end. And on my good days, I don't carry a huge amount of that. Part of it was even watching my dad, on his deathbed, the last book he read was on string theory. And I remember him, like one of our very last conversations, he was just talking about how complex the universe is, and how string theory essentially posits a universe, a universe that is so immensely complex and full of possibility that everything that can happen is happening, and always has happened and will happen. And he went, and Jesus, this ecstasy of possibility. And then basically said, God's in there, God is in the infinite complexity in the infinite beauty. And he was really happy to go. And so I also reflect on that. And you know, it's such a gift to be with him in that and then get to hold his hand when he, you know, went away.

Dr. Dana 54:09

You know, one of the things that Kim and I have talked a lot about the notion that spirituality in our lives can either be really, really complicated or simple. And it depends on how complicated you need things to be in order to allow the relationship between you and God or whatever you want to call it to develop. And we've met people that have had to have it be super complicated, because most of us don't believe things could be simple. And then there's people I can talk about myself, I try to keep it as simple as possible. I just want to keep it a conversation. Yeah. And let it be that simple. Because I'd really don't believe that God really cares whether we make it complicated or not. It's what we're willing to allow it to come to us in whatever way that we can find it and it sounds like part of what you've been. You know, the fun in your singing with your, with your group is a way to connect that feels really sweet. And connect.

Glenn Phillips 55:07

Yeah, and it feels increasingly. I mean, that idea of you know what, what is God?

Dr. Dana 55:18

I only use that term for some No.

Glenn Phillips 55:21

But I used to call myself an atheist. And I found it kind of empowering to over the last few years like use the word God again, to mean basically just enough personification to say thanks once again to say thank you to the universe for existing for bothering to be this amazing, complex thing, which happens to include me and I get to be a human being, which is most things in the universe don't get to do. And we're weird as hell. Worse. So,

Dr. Dana 55:57

you know, I used to call myself an antagonist. It wasn't even kind enough to make it agnostic or what's your religion? I'm an antagonist.

Glenn Phillips 56:07

But I feel like there's i i am a bit of an ecstatic I, you know, I love the Sufis I love you know, my dad was kind enough to give me either Shah books my mom took me to Temple my dad took me to the Zen priory and gave me the doubt a Ching and, and so and then books by Yeah, I Idris Shah, I had the mullah Nasir Dean books as a kid. And so there is such a beauty in such a human experience in innocence, ecstatic gratitude, in being purely in a moment and being unraveled by it in a way that kind of transcends pain or pleasure. I mean, it ends up I guess ecstasy would be considered to be pleasurable, but it's not about just feeling the good feelings, right. Tara brach has a, she has a few Dharma talks on types of love of loving kindness, which is kind of being drawn to the light in people and things. Compassion, which is the love that comes out through shared suffering, right, that compassion is understanding that everything feels everyone feels and that joy is holding, loving kindness and compassion equally. And so that it's not not a denial of suffering. And there's something in in that ecstatic joy, the tummy contains all the sadness, but it's not about like, shutting it out, or getting it out of the way. It's about becoming big enough to actually hold it. And that that's a powerful feeling. And yeah, that not a lot of narration needs to be done about the who and the why. And I mean, I'm interested in you know, Sam Harris, and Dawkins and all the, you know, staunch atheists, I get their criticisms of

religion, but maybe slightly less with Sam Harris. I feel like they ignore the beauty of the human spiritual experience. And so

Dr. Dana 58:39

what about your intuition?

Glenn Phillips 58:42

Intuition

Dr. Dana 58:42

may play a role in everything that we're talking about right now.

Glenn Phillips 58:47

I'm gonna say would ask you to define intuition

Dr. Dana 58:52

of the feeling that you've got inside of what's true for you and what feels right for you on the inside.

Glenn Phillips 59:01

Yeah. Oh, I mean, for me, it's that I'm here to pray. And I'm here to you know, once again to steal from Lawrence Cole. He calls himself a permission, Arey permission or permission airy turn that it's the but I'll give you another one. I consider him a friend. friends who are mentors, but I have an ability to feel in front of other people deeply in a way that hopefully allows them to open themselves up. And that's my favorite thing to do. That's a gift. Yeah. And it's and so once again, there's the idea that with you know, spiritual things, do you need a belief once again, I like seeing God just because it it's, it feels a little bit A countercultural for where I came from, to actually just embrace that word and not have it mean, something small. And to have it be, you know, if it's simply the sum total of all that is, and we keep finding out, there's more, you know, even dark matter, right, most of what exists in the universe we can't even perceive. And it doesn't mean we have to pretend to know how it's put together. I think religion is when we start making stories, we start making things petitionary or start saying, Well, I felt this big thing. So therefore, I have the one and only name of God, or the only answer to the only path rather than just saying, embracing the mystery, and embracing the possibility that that mystery offers.

Dr. Dana 1:00:54

So when you're onstage performing, do you find yourself getting lost? Sort of in the moment, and not, not sort of being in your head, but just being connected to that river of creativity and, and inspiration?

Glenn Phillips 1:01:11

Yeah, sometimes. I mean, the interesting thing about me playing my shows is I'm limited by the kinds of songs I write, and have traditionally written, I'm a, you know, a pop song writer, and I've had a, you know, I guess it talent for looking at the darker, sad side of things. And I know that communicates a lot to people, because we all share a loss, we all share sorrow. But it's interesting, try to figure out where I can go with that. And there's some bit that it's just if I'm, I think carrying a certain stance within myself, that's expansive, and that's loving, even just being there that transmits something. So it's encouraging

me to be taking good enough care of myself that when I'm on stage, I can just kind of, you know, I'm thinking this is metta enter, you know, this is, you know, a meta, not in like a Facebook way, but with two T's in the Buddhist way. Right. And so

Dr. Dana 1:02:32

We were showing what love looks like in your version of it.

Glenn Phillips 1:02:35

Yeah. And I think that's useful. And I think there is something in that language of shared loss, sorrow, insecurity, that's stuff that everybody deals with. In the world of community singing, it's much less my songs I've written some for that are in work that's, you know, kind of more ceremonial, which is almost more purely prayerful. I found a ton of joy in that. And I've wondered, I don't know if I found a balance for how all these fit together in my life. It's an active question, what do I do when I grow up? The great thing is I have a day job that I really love, people who I've really come to appreciate over the years, and an audience that wants to hear these songs, but I also feel like it's a bit of a shadow of a person. I'm, I'm not really anymore. And so it's a very active question kind of where, where I take that skill set and what's appropriate, and I feel like I've had a period where I, I think I found myself in the spiritual community where I felt seen without the context of my past for the first time, and I was so appreciative of that. And I was getting found at some point that I was getting a lot of ego gratification for the music I was bringing in and that I was and that the point of this was not ego gratification. And so really stepped back and have been kind of questioning my relationship to service and you know, the trappings of any spiritual practice. I mean, I have met Christians who are so phenomenally in tune with compassion and openness and love and are just full of that I have met Buddhists who are that I have met people of every religion as well who are dogmatic and closed down and think they have all the answers and are full of you know. And so I understand that religion and spiritual practice are all tools. And just because some people use them orally doesn't mean that that's the only way they can ever get used, but trying to find some balance for that, that desire to exist in those spiritual spaces more. But how those spiritual spaces often come with a lot of dogma. So and I don't think that just rolling your own is always necessarily a great idea either, because there's a lot of wisdom in the great practices, because they've made a lot of mistakes. Starting from scratch doesn't work either. So I don't know exactly what the path is. I'm, I've felt like I've been in a very transitional place for a very long time. But I appreciate that at this point in my life, I feel like, instead of having this panic, where I feel like I have to leave my town and my partner and my job and everything, and run away somewhere into an imaginary life where, where it's perfect, because it's imaginary. I feel like I have a really good starter kit of a community of wisdom of skill that will help me in these last 10 to 20, maybe even 30 years of my life to to offer something of value. But I have no idea what that's going to be.

Kim Fauskee 1:06:51

That was gonna be my last question. What was you know, what was going to be the next act for Glenn Phillips, but I'm going to ask you a little bit different question of, is there something that you've always wanted to do that you haven't done yet?

Glenn Phillips 1:07:06

I've wanted to get my degree. I had 59 credits, I took a psych class during lockdown. So now we have 61 credits, I believe, or maybe had 58 credits. In any event, I have 61 credits now.

Kim Fauskee 1:07:23

We're halfway there. Yeah, I

Glenn Phillips 1:07:25

have. I mean, once again, the possibilities are to continue things as they are, but just I mean, I, the wonderful thing that I finally, I'm mostly able to believe unless I'm in a depressive dip is that I love my life. And I don't think I wouldn't choose another life, and I wouldn't choose another place. That there's not something better somewhere else. For me, I like being in that feels best, it also takes a lot of skill to stay in, and to not see other eyes. And it takes a lot of work. But having, you know, what there's a Buddhist wisdom of no escape is one of the ones on the shelf. But that idea, if nothing changed, and all that ever got improved in my life, or my relationship to my life, that would be a win. There are also things that in terms of, you know, time away, I mean, I've thought of doing voiceover work, because there's insurance, if I'm through the union, and you know, I have the gear, I have the technical expertise, I could leave it when I got away. It's a skill set I could build, it's not really close to my heart, but it would be a good day job. I thought of going back to school and becoming a therapist, because I can I think because I feel a lot I can also hold a lot. And so that would be a big new challenge. And I'm really glad that once again, I have a day job that is essentially part time that allows me these choices. There's so much you're really good at, privilege and having that choice, and I'm really good at it. But I don't think I'm driven enough to want to win at it. And I think I also realized that like to be successful at music, I think it takes a real desire to be successful in music, and, and meaning not just creatively. And I would say even you know the albums I've made as a solo artist. I've written some really good songs, really worthwhile songs. I don't know if I've made a great album. I think mostly in the records I've done a combination of fear of success and fear of failure. I've preemptively kind of made the albums a little ugly.

Kim Fauskee 1:10:23

Or there's certainly more depth in your work recently that at least I've noticed, especially in the new tote album as well,

Glenn Phillips 1:10:31

there's a lot more depth in the work but I feel like the solo albums I I kind of deliberately undersold them and was like, I can't make a big sounding record because I'm probably just going to to or solo acoustic, it's not going to go anywhere, like *Why* spend the money and do the exit like, and so there's been an element of self sabotage in those. And I think, you know, the weird thing about being a musician, I know, I'm really good at it. I'm never gonna stop playing songs for people. I love it. But everyone's supposed to want to be in the limelight. And everyone's supposed to want this and at some point going, like, do I actually give his shit. And it's not something I want to win at. And the fields are full of really good people who really want to win this and I find over and over that the things that touch me the most, the musical moments have been unamplified in rooms with people I love. Or they've been prayerful, or they've been an acquirer, or they've been like intimacy and cracking people open. And that is what most excites me. And

Kim Fauskee 1:11:52

that evokes an emotion and makes a difference to Yeah,

Glenn Phillips 1:11:55

and it doesn't mean I don't absolutely love touring with the band and doing that work. I'm so grateful for it now. And I looked at it, you know, as the albatross, right. It's either a sign of luck, except when it's dead around your neck. And like, there have been years you know, we took the albatross, we pumped out the water, give it some out to mouth, it's flying again. It's great. So I feel like the band offers me a great opportunity to explore these other modalities. And it's, once again, a very active question. I'm not going to abandon songwriting. I need to write songs when I'm doing nothing. And I'm in silence. That's where songs come out. But it's more a question of where, well, where it's the most enlivening and have the most use and being in a rock band. Great, but I don't really believe in rock and roll. So it's.

Kim Fauskee 1:12:58

Well, Glenn, really appreciate you being here. I think there's definitely another conversation to be had with you. Maybe when you get off we can pick this up at another point. But for those listening. Toad the wet sprocket has a website. Glen Phillips has a website. They're touring all over the country. Go Sam. It's well worth it. So Glenn, thanks. Thank you. Be well, thank you. Travel safe. Thanks so much. We'll see you again. Okay.

Fear Me Out 1:13:31

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