Transforming Lives through Meaningful Travel with Dr. Corey Martin

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Guest: Corey Martin

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Corey Martin: 0:29

What if we could live our life differently so we had the time to slow down and to stop and say, Hey, we haven't had a cup of coffee for a while. You want to go get a cup of coffee or you wanna have lunch together today? Or maybe after work we go grab a beer and let's catch up. It's been a long time. What if we could live a life a little bit differently, more loving and kind, and a little bit slower so that we could pay attention to things that really matter?

David Lowry: 0:54

That was Corey Martin. A physician who made a change in his life. He now works with Bounce Travels and he helps individuals connect with the world and themselves. It's going to be a marvelous story on Peaceful Life Radio. I'm David Lowry, and with me today is my good friend Don Drew. Don, you doing okay today?

Don Drew: 1:14

David, I'm doing great and I've got a good friend of mine. Corey and I first met probably about 2018, 2019, I think it was 2019. And I'm really excited to have him with us today. Dr. Corey Martin is the founder of Bounce Travels, as you mentioned. Company dedicated to creating meaningful immersive travel experiences that go far beyond tourism. With a background in medicine and business leadership, Corey launched Bounce Travels to help individuals connect with the world and themselves through transformative journeys. His work emphasizes curiosity, community and personal growth, guiding travelers to discover not only new destinations, but also new perspectives on their lives. Corey has worked with a wide range of travelers, including late career professionals seeking renewal, purpose, and a sense of direction for the next chapter of life. Whether through curated group adventures or custom itineraries, Corey encourages people to use travel as a catalyst for answering the big question What's next? Corey, welcome to Peaceful Life Radio.

Corey Martin: 2:13

Well thank you. I'm glad to be here with you guys and uh, that introduction makes me sound amazing. I want to hear more about me!

Don Drew: 2:19

Yeah that's what we shoot for, Corey. So let's start with your story. What inspired you to launch Bounce Travels?

Corey Martin: 2:26

As you alluded to, I'm a family physician. And when I first started practice a little over 20 years ago, I came into an organization where I could deliver babies and take care of people in the hospital and everywhere else. And one of the things that I did better than anybody else is I got really good at burning myself out. Where it might take people 20 to 30 years to do that, I did really good and I did it in five years. Five years into my practice I was super frustrated, overwhelmed, and didn't look forward to going to work anymore. Just dreaded it. Especially on weekends. I'd get to midday Sunday and be like, oh God, I can't believe I have to go back to work tomorrow. I knew I needed to do something different. I applied for jobs. I got this job as the chief medical officer of our organization, the doctor in charge of the doctors. And I saw the posting and it looked to me like it was going to meetings, drinking coffee, eating donuts, and maybe messing with people's lives a little bit. And I'm like I'm up for that. Those are things that I like to do. I think I would be really good at this. And so I applied for this job. Thankfully I was the only one and I got it. And so the first part of my story is choosing to do something different when I knew I was burned out. And thankfully for me, I had an amazing boss who knew I was burned out and helped me work through that. And then we started creating tools and things for our physicians, nurses and other staff in our community to help with their wellbeing. Fast forward a few years and we were doing some really amazing stuff in our community, and then a couple tragic things happened, one of them being one of my really good friends who was an obstetrician, he delivered two of my kids, was a really good friend. One beautiful sunny Saturday in July went out for a motorcycle ride and never came home. I remember getting the call that night from one of my friends telling me that Eric had died. And that punch in the gut of Wow, like I just walked out of the clinic with him on Friday. He's leaving behind his wife and four school age kids. This could be any one of us any day when we leave work, there's no guarantee

we're getting home. So it was a real awakening for me and for many of us of, Are you doing the kind of work you wanna do? Are you living the kinda life you wanna live? Because tomorrow isn't guaranteed. That was the first step in my journey of trying to do something differently and showing up in a way that I wanted to show up. And so I tried a lot of different things. I had some really great ideas of how to spend more time with my family. And I think it was like for many of us every January when we do the New Year's resolutions and we're really good for about two weeks and then we fall back into our old ways and that's what happened to me. Then 90 days later I got another phone call from my boss, the hospital president, and this was a Sunday evening when she called me and she said, Corey, you need to get into the hospital right now. And she told me that my other very good friend who was a pediatrician in our community, had taken his life in our hospital chapel. And for many of us, that was another shaking of, Okay, like you didn't pay attention last time around, so maybe you should pay attention this time around. And I wish that was the end of that story, but the very next day there was another part to that and I walked over to the hospital to do colonoscopies and the medical secretary sitting at the desk looked up at me that next day and she said, Oh, Corey, I'm so glad you're here today. Because yesterday when I heard that a doc had taken his life I was really afraid I was gonna hear it was you. That was 10 years ago when that was said to me. And it still brings this heaviness in my chest and a little waveryness to my voice because there's a lot of truth to that in how many of us live our life. We gotta hurry through the day to get the stuff done so we can go home and be with our family. And how many times have we walked down a hallway seeing somebody we know and said, Hey, how's it going? And what we wanna hear back from them is Fine how are you? Because frankly, we don't have enough time to stop and talk. We wanna do the nicety, but that's it. And there's a lot of times that we hear back, Well, it's eight o'clock in the morning and it's already a pretty crappy day. What if we could live our life differently so that in those moments we felt like we had the time to slow down and to stop and say, Hey, we haven't had a cup of coffee for a while. You want to go get a cup of coffee or you wanna have lunch together today? Or maybe after work we go grab a beer and let's catch up. It's been a long time. What if we could live a life a little bit differently, more loving and kind, and a little bit slower so that we could pay attention to things that really matter So that's how Bounce Travels got started, was this awareness in myself of, I need to do something differently. I need to show up differently to live the life I'm supposed to live. And that just so happened to then evolve into travels and what we do now.

David Lowry: 7:20

Corey, what you've described is painfully touching, but at the same time, it describes the lives of so many people who are entering the second half of life. They are firmly established in a career. Maybe they can do it in their sleep now. There's not much upward mobility for them. They've long since got all of the good things and joy out of it and wondering, Is this all there is? It's really encouraging to hear that you've come up with a solution and one of your solutions is tourism, but it's not just any kind of tourism. You think about travel as more than tourism, I think, don't you?

Corey Martin: 7:55

Absolutely. Bounce Travels and what we do with Bounce Travels is very different than a typical travel company that would be focused on logistics, flights, hotels and tours, and that kind of stuff. What we do is provide a service of growth for people. How can you come and learn, develop, and live the life you wanna live? And how do you learn simple tools you can incorporate every day? And that's the core of it. And then, oh, by the way, we do stuff in amazing places all over the world where you get to do things you've always wanted to do alongside amazing people who are trying to figure this stuff out just like you are. You know, you talk about how In the second half of life I always envision, it's like we're climbing up the ladder and we get to the top of the ladder and we're like, Oh no! This isn't even the ladder I want to be on anymore. I wanna be on that one over there and how do I climb back down and start over again? And this is a really wonderful way because guess what, you and I aren't the only people that think this. There's a lot of people out there that are thinking this. And what if we could have conversations about those kind of topics with other people in the same situation in a place that's really amazing? And that's what Bounce Travels does, is put people together to have really deep, amazing, wonderful conversations. And it happens to be hiking the Camino in Spain and it happens to be looking out over the Grand Canyon or in Sedona or other amazing places in the world.

Don Drew: 9:21

Corey that's great. Tell us what one of the trips might look like. How does it play out? How do you integrate the resilience building part of it with the hiking, traveling piece?

Corey Martin: 9:34

Thanks for that question, Don. The retreat starts months before we even go. We start with a WhatsApp group that everybody introduces themselves. We have a Zoom call beforehand.

Everybody gets to meet each other who are on this retreat. And then over the course of eight weeks prior to going on the retreat, I will post different reflections and we'll have different conversations online. So, by the time we show up at a retreat, people already know each other a little bit and they're excited to see each other because they want to have more in-depth conversations about things. And once we get to our location, we create this space that is maybe something people have heard about, like a safe space to have conversations. But we take a very different approach to that. And the approach is like, how do we create a Brave Space? It's not a safe space, but a brave space in that we're gonna do hard stuff and we're gonna have really deep, amazing, courageous conversations and sometimes it doesn't quite feel as safe as we would hope it would be, but we get to build this together as a group. And this is our container to have these conversations. Then the way the structure of the day looks like is in the mornings we get up, we have breakfast together, and then we have a few sessions in the morning. And these sessions are gonna be educational and they might be on tips and tricks and research on gratitude and why gratitude is so important to incorporate in our life. They might be on the power of connection and the power of social connection. Then later in the week, they're on deeper things like, How do I set good boundaries with people? Talk about grief and forgiveness. So we have these conversations in the morning and then the afternoon is spent hiking and doing amazing, wonderful things in places that, it's not just that the learning stops in the morning. The morning is the planting of seeds, and then the conversations happen all afternoon as you're hiking with other people, getting to know people, learning each other's stories, and you continue to grow all day. And then we come back together and have a community meal with each other that night and usually if we're in Spain, there's wine, and if we're in Germany, there's beer and there's all kinds of other things that are a wonderful part of a great trip.

David Lowry: 11:43

Corey, I am really impressed by what you're doing here. It sounds wonderful. You know, when you start your career, it's all about the doing of the job. You wanna be effective, efficient, you're working your way to climb up that ladder as you said. But it sounds to me like you are helping people understand, it's not just what you do, but how you do it. And learning that your job takes on a whole nother meaning when you learn how to incorporate something like gratitude and learn how to do it really well. My question for you is you're gonna get people at different stages of life. So, how do you help people at these different stages navigate through that as they take this trip with you?

Corey Martin: 12:23

Think the best part about these retreats are the varying age groups that come. The vast majority of people who come on our retreats are 50 to 70 years old. That's where a lot of people are in transition. A lot of people are transitioning into that second half of life and going, okay, like I figured out all the things that give me all the accolades and all the things in the first half. Now, where's meaning and purpose? And what does that look like? And how do I cultivate that? So there's this vast majority of people in their fifties to seventies that show up. Then there are younger people and it really is like this Montessori version of learning. The young people teach the older people about things. The people who are more seasoned have really great advice for the younger people and how they could get along with their parents differently. And it's just this amazing amalgamation of people coming together to learn from each other.

Don Drew: 13:16

Okay, so full disclosure for our listeners. I have been on, I believe, seven Bounce trips and I facilitated one of those and probably will some in the future as well. And I want everybody to know that I've had quite a bit of experience traveling with Corey and with Bounce Travels, one of the things that I found most useful, and it really speaks to what you just said, is the triad process. You integrate that with almost every trip. Can you talk about that and how effective it is?'Cause I know for me personally, when I was going through end of career transition that was one of the most valuable things for me to experience.

Corey Martin: 13:51

Thanks for bringing that up, Don. One of the things that the vast majority of our retreats have within them is called a clearness triad. And this is based out of Quakerism and Parker Palmer's work. And I'm certified in facilitating retreats for the Center for Courage and Renewal, which is Parker Palmer's work. And we incorporate these things and spend some of the week helping people to have the tools to ask really good questions of each other and do deep listening. So when people are presenting dilemmas that they might have, things that they wanna work on, we pair them up with two other people who over the course of the week, have become experts at deeply listening and asking really good questions to allow the person who has the conundrum or the dilemma that they're working on, to really deeply listen to their inner voice and the knowledge inside them. Because we work from a standpoint of, I'm not gonna give you the answer, the answer is inside of you. These triads are wonderful ways for people to do deep inner understanding of what are the next steps

for them. And everybody has a question that they come with. And they all have the opportunity to present it and have other people ask them really great questions so that they can listen to their own inner knowledge and viewpoint that they have.

David Lowry: 15:08

Corey, it sounds to me like you are really putting your finger on the"meaning button" that people are looking for. What are some of the questions you're talking about especially for end stage or late stage career people?

Corey Martin: 15:21

There's a lot of questions that focus around what's next for me? I've gotten to this point in my work career and yeah, it's okay. But I don't feel fulfilled anymore and maybe I'm not quite ready to retire. And so what's the next step for me? Or I am ready to retire and how do I live that life? I don't wanna go on, three big cruises and sit on the couch and watch TV for the rest of my life. So how do I re-pot this plant so that the roots can continue to grow, develop, become bigger and better and more amazing than it was before, but it's in a new container. And it has a new way of seeing life. And so the vast majority of questions that people come on these retreats are around that.

Don Drew: 16:03

Can you think of an example of somebody that's been on one of your retreats that stands out that really got clarity during the retreat and went on to change their life in some meaningful way?

Corey Martin: 16:15

I think what most people find is a better way for me to do the life I'm living. There's a lot of stories around this. I would say one of the most common theme here is that people that are mid to late career, reflecting on their life and going, I'm still working full time and I feel like I actually need to work this much, even though I don't want to because I've got all of these financial things that are laid out for me. I've got a country club membership and I've got a cabin that I pay for, and I've got a boat and I've got all these things and one of the things that people do is get really clear on what's important to them and what's not important to them.

So I remember this gentleman, a good friend of mine that we've known each other for 25 years. And I said at the end of the retreat, Well, Brian, what are you gonna take from this? What are you gonna take home with you? And he is like, you know what? I think all the stuff was really great and I learned so many things, but the thing I'm gonna take home is I'm gonna prioritize the things that I want to do and get rid of all of these things that I thought I should do. So he went home and he and his wife put up the cabin for sale. They sold the boat, they got rid of the country club membership, and they both went down to working part-time for the last 10 years of their career so that they could travel more, show up at their kids things more, and have space for them to live the life they wanted to live. So it was a real reprioritizing of what's important for me? And that's a common, consistent theme for people and it shows up differently for everybody. But what they realized is that they were spending so much of their time to pay for these things that they only enjoyed a couple weeks out of the year anyway, and that there was a better way for them.

David Lowry: 17:59

You mentioned that a lot of the people who go on these trips basically start at age 50 maybe up to the seventies and so on. Do you find there's a difference of a personality of people who look at this stage of life as end of life versus new beginnings?

Corey Martin: 18:13

Fortunately for us, I think most people who choose to come on a retreat like this are very expansive and they're thinking about What's next? How do I grow? How do I develop? And this isn't over. Versus people who are like, Well, I'm retired now. Shut the doors batten down the hatches, board up the windows a little bit and here I'm gonna be. It's the growth mindset versus the restrictive mindset. For us, and the people I get to interact with on these retreats, they've self-selected into being of growth mindset and wanting to learn.

Don Drew: 18:42

I know when we were on the Camino. There were long periods where we were walking and thinking and contemplating our lives and that's one part of the movement, but the other one has to do with getting out of where you're used to being and getting to some someplace new. What's your thinking on that?

Corey Martin: 18:58

There's so many wonderful parts of travel. Travel gives you a laboratory to practice new ways of being, right? You can try on curiosity and risk and rest. You can try on connection. And you're in a place where it isn't familiar, and so it gives you this ability to show up in a different way, to pay attention in a different way, and also to realize we're not all made the same. There's beauty in the way people in Spain show up and do things versus the way we do it in the US versus somewhere else. And it can knock you a little bit off balance. And so that's a good thing, right? For us to be a little bit off balance so that we can work on our core muscles and it helps us to think about things in new ways that maybe we wouldn't, if we wouldn't be in a different country. One of my favorite things of doing retreats in foreign countries is I recommend people don't get cell service while they're there because it takes you off of social media. It takes you out of your usual routine and you can try on all kinds of new stuff. You can try on new ways of meditating, a different time of getting up in the morning. Most of these places even when we go to eat at night, one of the things like eating in Spain, we'll go to eat at eight o'clock, 8:00 PM in Spain, and we will be the first people in the restaurant. That's very different than how we do that here. And so trying on new ways of living and life there's the space here to try it on and do something differently.

David Lowry: 20:23

Corey, a little more than a year ago, my wife and I decided that we would spend a semester abroad with some college students. And when I came back, people asked me about the trip and I said it was the trip I didn't know that I needed. And it sounds to me like what you're doing is the trip that people don't know that they need, but they desperately need.

Corey Martin: 20:44

I think you're absolutely right and for years I've referred to Bounce Travels retreats is you sign up for what you want and then we give you what you need. And those are very different things. Because yeah, you sign up for this great, amazing trip to hike the Camino to go to Guatemala, to hike through Germany, go to Octoberfest. These are things you think you want. And then when you're there, you get what you need, which is community, connection, being around other amazing lovely people, having the space to be contemplative, do your own inner work, and show up in a different way. And so you frame that beautifully in how I also talk about these retreats. Many times we sign up for what we want because we don't really know what we need. And Wow, isn't it an amazing gift when we get what we need, as well as what we want?

Don Drew: 21:32

You've seen so many people transformed through the Bounce experience. What's the most surprising or profound change that you've witnessed?

Corey Martin: 21:40

One of the most beautiful things that happens is during our retreats we talk a lot about how we can reconnect with nature and how nature speaks to us and the spirituality of nature. I think some of the most beautiful ways that shows up is when people slow down enough to notice the hummingbird that's been following them for the last three blocks that they're walking. The beautiful white horse that is two miles out in Ireland that puts its head up and sees you and comes rushing over to you to say, hi. The dog that comes around the corner when you're having this epiphany about how you wanna live your life differently and this random dog comes running around the corner and nuzzles up to you. These are all instances of things that have happened on retreats when people allow themselves to be open to the gifts of nature and how nature shows up. If we can slow down and pay attention to some of those voices that are out there, they bring real meaning to us.

Don Drew: 22:38

What's next for you and Bounce?

Corey Martin: 22:39

One of the things that I think speaks so loudly of the work that we do at Bounce Travels is that. 30 to 40% of the people who are on our retreats are people who've been on our retreats before. We have a lot of repeat customers. As Don said, Don and Christie have been on, I think seven retreats. We've had people that have been on eight and nine retreats. This is our ninth year, so they've been with us every single year. They say, I love this stuff. I love the people who come on these retreats, and I need one of these a year, like my yearly flu shot or vitamins that I take. As we continue to grow, we continue to add in new places and new locations, and so every year we try to add at least one, if not two locations, one international location and one US-based location. We continue to be pretty heavily attended by people in healthcare because we offer continuing education credits for people in healthcare. And so expanding that into other professions and other places where people

show up. And we want to continue to offer credits for people if that's something that helps them too, so that they can take that back home to their jobs and their professions and use them to develop themselves. Our Website is bounce travels.com. You can log on there and see all kinds of different retreats that we have coming up. We typically post our retreats about a year out, and plenty of time to look at things that you might be interested in doing and show up there. On the flip side, not only do we do travel stuff, but if you're in an organization and you want the same type of material in your organization, we do a lot of leadership and organizational development for institutions as well. And that is also on bounce travels.com and our other website, innovations in resilience.com.

David Lowry: 24:24

Corey, I'm absolutely thrilled that you burned out five years into your career because if it hadn't been for that, we wouldn't have bounce travels, we wouldn't have all of these personal journeys with the self-reflection, change, and transformation available. Thank you so much for being our guest today on Peaceful Life Radio.